

**Exploring how gay men manage their gay identity
in the workplace.**

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Philosophy.

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Simon Roberts, declare that the thesis entitled 'Exploring how gay men manage their identity in the workplace' and the work presented in it is my own and all references are cited accordingly.

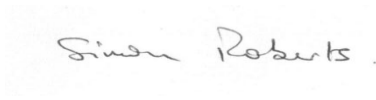
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Abstract

In the UK, as in many western nations, there have been a number of progressive pieces of legislation enacted with the intent to eradicate discrimination on the basis of sexuality in the workplace. The pace and scale of acceptance of gay equality laws has been relatively rapid in recent years. To cite an example, in 2004 gay marriage was only legal in Belgium and Holland, whereas in 2013 it is legal in 11 countries (The Guardian, 2013). Up until this legislation came into force, the focus of previous research probably unsurprisingly has been predominately around two strands; sexual minorities' experiences of discrimination in the workplace and the issue of disclosure/non-disclosure of a gay identity. There has been little exploration 'beyond the closet', in how gay men manage their identity post anti-discrimination laws combined with more liberal attitudes towards homosexuality. In particular, there has been a paucity of research on the ways gay men challenge, negotiate and conform in the two way process of managing their identities; this thesis aims to address this gap.

Data were gathered from forty-five semi-structured in-depth interviews with self-identified gay men in a wide range of occupations and ages working in a seaside resort on the South coast of England. A qualitative methodology was used in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the ways gay men manage their gay identity in their interaction with others. Furthermore, by using reflexivity this thesis aims to show how the sample of respondents had modified and changed the ways they presented their gay identity throughout their working lives. In particular, the thesis aims to uncover critical incidents based upon their sexuality that respondents confronted in their interaction with others.

The key findings that emerged from the data include; the identification of a range of strategies gay men deployed in how they managed their identity and dealt with discrimination from confrontation to conformity; the multiple constraints and opportunities that impacted upon the ways gay men both managed and disclosed their gay identity; the perceived incongruity around positions of authority, professionalism and a

gay identity; and finally how silence was used as a form of exclusion creating significant barriers in the ways gay men could make themselves visible and use their voice within organisations. These findings considerably extend our understanding of the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in the workplace; the impact of contextual influences on managing a gay identity, and gay men's experiences against a back drop of post-anti-discrimination laws in the U.K. The thesis will aid HR practitioners in giving them a better understanding of the dilemmas gay men face in their interactions with others in the workplace.

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Introduction

In the summer of 2006 I started to put together a research proposal for my PhD application. At the time, the Employment Regulations (SO) 2003 had recently come onto the statute book added to which the first Civil Partnerships had taken place towards the end of 2005. Since my initial research proposal there has also been a sea change in public opinion towards homosexuality and a seemingly positive attitude from the media towards sexual minorities. This has culminated with the recent passing of legislation through both Houses of Parliament of the Same Sex marriage bill, with Royal Assent in July 2013. This was something generally perceived as unimaginable when I first embarked on this study.

Given the backdrop of recent socio-legal changes this thesis aims to explore how gay men are taking advantage of these changes to be more visible, assertive and forthright in the ways they manage and present their gay identity in the workplace. This research aims to look beyond the issue of concealment of a gay identity (although this is still an important area of investigation), to explore the ways in which gay men challenge, negotiate and conform in the two-way process of managing their identities. Through exploring the validation process involved in the formation of their external identities, this thesis aims to identify critical incidents and experiences in gay men's working lives in which they have resisted or challenged identities, labels and stereotypes ascribed by others. The thesis aims to explore how gay men respond to perceived discrimination and the reactions of others to their sexuality. Previous studies have explored the issue of gay identity management with regards to passing and covering strategies including studies done by Day and Schoenrade (1997, 2000); Humphrey (1999); Ward and Winstanley (2003, 2004). Indeed, Creed and Cooper (2008) note that self-disclosure and nondisclosure of a gay identity has been the unifying theme in research on LGBT people. These studies could be classified as the 'first wave' of research before progressive

legislation was introduced to the majority of Western nations outlawing formal overt forms of discrimination against sexual minorities.

In addition, unlike previous research in this area, an objective is to investigate how gay men have managed their identities throughout their working lives. By doing this, this study aims to discover whether there have been any changes in the management of their identities in light of recent legislation combined with more positive coverage in the media as well as more liberal attitudes towards gay men.

Given recent anti-discrimination legislation, and in some organisations a tarnished image with respect to sexual orientation a number of organisations have responded by seeking to be diversity champions in order to present a corporate image as being an employer of choice. One of the main LGBT lobby groups in the U.K. is Stonewall that actively encourages organisations to apply for awards. These awards are given to organisations that meet and exceed a list of criteria in their workplace equality index. Stonewall's top 100 employers equality index 2013, included Police Forces, Fire Brigades and the Armed Forces. These organisations had previously been perceived as being hostile to sexual minorities. One of the startling omissions to this list is how few small companies are represented on this list. In fact, few studies have been done on the experiences of gay men in small organisations. My study aims to explore the experiences of gay men in a wide range of workplaces from blue chip companies to small enterprises. The time seems ripe to investigate the impact that these equality diversity champion organisations have had on gay identity management and compare them with organisations that are not perceived as so supportive to sexual minorities.

In recent years the visibility of gay men has been more prominent in the media in the U.K. Furthermore, the public imagination has been awakened by vast coverage and debate over the legalisation of gay marriage for same sex couples. The time would therefore seem ripe to investigate whether this public visibility of gay sexuality has translated into gay men being more open in how they express their sexuality in the workplace. Equally it would seem apt to explore how others in the workplace react and

respond to an openly gay identity. The thesis aims to explore whether gay men feel that work colleagues are more inclusive and supportive of them.

Given all these recent changes it seems opportune to investigate whether they have made a real difference in the ways gay men manage and choose to disclose their gay identity in the workplace. The thesis aims to investigate the ways gay men have adapted and modified the way they manage their gay identity over their working lives and the impact of work context and organisational setting.

1. Research questions

The over riding aim of this research is to explore how gay men manage their gay identity in their interaction with others in the workplace. Specifically, the following research questions below seek to address the overall research aim:

- How do different organisational contexts impact upon the ways gay men manage their gay identity and how problematic do disclosure issues remain?
- How important is their sexuality in their working lives in defining who they are?
- What self-presentation strategies do gay men use in managing their identity in the workplace?
- How do gay men perceive other colleagues react and respond to their presumed sexuality?
- How do gay men work upon, challenge, conform to, modify and resist the identities, labels and stereotypes ascribed by others?

Outline of the thesis

The study is concerned with the ways that gay men manage their gay identity against a backdrop of changing social contexts. Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature on the experiences of sexual minorities in the workplace. To give some backdrop and context to the ways gay men present and do identity work the Chapter initially reviews sexual

minorities' perceived experiences of discrimination over the past 30 years. The Chapter then moves on to explore how gay men react and respond to discrimination. Previous literature has identified a range of coping strategies from active to passive (Snape et al, 1995). In addition, the Chapter explores the motives behind why gay men choose to disclose their sexuality in the workplace. The literature, e.g. (Creed and Scully 2000; Bernstein 1997; Humphrey 1999), identifies a number of reasons why gay men decide to 'come out' including: as a claiming encounter in order to normalise a gay identity, an educative encounter and finally a political motive to effect social change. The Chapter also investigates the impact of social context and organisational setting on gay identity disclosure/non-disclosure decisions. Here a number of contextual variables are explored and their impact on identity management including; the impact of LGBT organisational networks, the impact of recent legislation in the U.K. and gay men's experiences of working in male dominated masculinised occupations. A mining of the literature uncovers a cluster of studies focussing on the role of silence in the workplace. Silence manifests itself in a number of forms from organisations and work colleagues as a form of suppression, resistance and as hostility. Silence also comes from sexual minorities too as a form of passive resistance, a defensive strategy and as an avoidance tactic. An umbrella theme that ties all the areas of investigation is an exploration of how sexual minorities react and respond to discrimination, silence, dominant heterosexual discourses, humour and pressures to conform to normative forms of masculinity.

Chapter 3 explores different theoretical concepts and their potential impact on identity management strategies including the concepts of sameness and difference. The thesis explores the debate around strategies of difference and sameness that have been the focus of feminist writers to investigate whether these concepts could equally apply to gay men in how they present their gay identity to others in the workplace. The Chapter also explores the concept of 'marked identities' to investigate whether gay men actively make their sexuality a dominant identity in their presentation of self to others. Similarly, drawing upon on the concept of tokenism the Chapter explores whether others see gay men predominately through their sexuality as a master status.

At the core of the conceptual framework the Chapter explores the two way process of identity construction. The Chapter draws upon the works of Jenkins (2008); Goffman (1959, 1968); Brekhus (2003) and Bradley (1996) and investigates their usefulness in relation to gay identity management. A common theme extracted from these works is the centrality of interaction with others in the formation of identities. Both Goffman and Jenkins emphasise the fluidity and changeability of our identities in interaction with others. All of the above theorists argue that individuals have a degree of agency in the construction of their identities. According to Jenkins, identification is something over which struggles take place, are contested and fought over. It is this concept of identity that is carried forward throughout the thesis. This study picks up on this theme to explore the extent to which gay men are willing to push the boundaries between how they see themselves and the labels and meanings assigned by others. The challenge that has been set is to find out how gay men manage the day-to-day interactions with others in the workplace. In the validation of their identities, the aim is to identify critical incidents and experiences in gay men's working lives in which they have resisted, accepted or challenged identities, labels and stereotypes ascribed by others.

In Chapter 4 the methodological issues are addressed in order to carry out this thesis. A pervasive theme running throughout this chapter is the role of reflexivity evaluating my impact as a researcher on the study and the various practical and theoretical matters that were confronted. The Chapter begins with a justification for adopting qualitative research methods, making reference to previous studies exploring the lives of LGBT people. The next section discusses the strengths and weaknesses of various participant recruitment strategies including the merits of snowballing, the issues of sample size and representativeness of the sample. Also the problems surrounding defining a gay identity are discussed. A common theme running through the next three sections; revealing my sexuality, the issue of power relations in interviews and my epistemological standpoint, is the influence of the researcher on the study. The final section, discusses the interview structure and how the data was analysed.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 present the research findings and an analysis of the data. Chapter 5 focuses on the impact of workplace climate and context on disclosure decisions and gay identity work. The Chapter explores a number of contextual factors and their impact on identity management including; the presence of gay work colleagues and senior managers, the impact of supportive co-workers and senior managers, the impact of LGBT networking groups and unions, the impact of organisational anti-discrimination policies, the effectiveness of sexual orientation awareness training and the impact of legislation. A key finding in this Chapter is how a number of contextual factors constrained respondents from disclosing their gay identity. These contextual factors included working in stereotypically masculine blue collar, male dominated workplaces where hostile homophobic comments were expressed by employees added to which there was an absence of any other known gay employee. All of these respondents apart from one adopted a passive compliant approach accepting derogatory remarks, not challenging discrimination or harassment. This contrasted with those who worked in supportive environments. Eight respondents worked in organisations characterised as having strong diversity policies, organisational support through the funding and resourcing of in-company LGBT networks. These respondents had seized the opportunity of a supportive working environment to confront or challenge others when faced with hostility in respect of their gay identity. A key factor was the support of and at times the intervention of senior management.

Chapter 6 focuses on the internal dimensions of identity. This Chapter explores how gay men present their gay identity in the workplace and how they shape and modify their presentation of self in light of the reactions of others. The Chapter also investigates the importance respondents place on their gay identity. One of the key findings in this Chapter experienced by those in white collar occupations was the dilemma around how they balanced the presentation of their professional identity with their gay identity, as if the two identities were incongruous. This dilemma was particularly acute where their professional role required them to exercise authoritative power over others. Respondents felt that they had to perform normative forms of masculinity so that their performance in their professional role could be deemed credible in the eyes of others. The findings also

revealed how some respondents would use humour or play up to stereotypes in their presentation of self. They adopted this approach in order to normalise their gay identity.

Chapter 7 explores the external dimensions of identity. The focus of this Chapter is on the categorisation and evaluation of a gay identity by others. Others here would include: co-workers, senior managers and clients. The Chapter explores how others react and respond to gay co-workers. The fieldwork did not involve interviewing and collating information from these co-workers. The data collected was solely obtained through interviewing 45 self-defined gay men. The first part of this Chapter explores whether gay men felt that their gay identity was a marked one or a master status in the eyes of others. To unpack this concept the sub themes of stereotyping and tokenism were explored. The second part of this Chapter explores how others mark difference and create social boundaries. This is broken down into the sub themes of discomfort, distance, policing masculinity and exclusion to inclusion. Finally, the issue of silence is discussed, exploring how silence from others puts pressures on gay men to self-edit information about themselves in order to accommodate any perceived discomfort displayed by others. The Chapter concludes by arguing that silence is deployed by others as a form of exclusion.

In Chapter 8 Jenkins' (2008) analytical tool the *interaction order* is used to explore how gay men manage and negotiate their gay identity in light of the reactions and responses of others. The *interaction order* is where the boundaries may be pushed between the individual's interpretation of self-identity and that ascribed by others. The main focus of this Chapter is to explore the degree to which gay men are on the one hand willing to push their interpretation of their self-identity and on the other to allow the perceived ascriptions and categorisations by others to prevail. The findings revealed that respondents adopted a range of approaches from direct confrontational self-assertion strategies to passive acceptance or compliance to the categorisation by others. Within the interaction order, the Chapter explores whether gay men are willing to challenge or conform to the dominant displays or discourses of heterosexuality in the workplace. In addition, the Chapter investigates whether gay men feel they can express their sexuality in the same manner as their heterosexual colleagues.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis. The findings of the previous four empirical Chapters are discussed. The thesis is also rounded off by demonstrating its contribution to knowledge. In addition, the Chapter discusses how the findings add to the existing body of research on the experiences of gay men and identity management in the workplace. In tying up the various themes and concepts explored in this chapter, the chapter first restates each of the research objectives in light of the research findings. The Chapter is finally concluded by outlining the limitations of the study as well as suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2

Previous literature on the experiences of sexual minorities in the workplace

2.1. Introduction

Until recently there has been little research on sexual minorities in the diversity literature both in the U.K. and the U.S. (Ward 2008; Klatwitter 1998). As Bowen and Blackmon (2003) argue there has been a ‘spiral of silence’ surrounding the experiences and voices of sexual minorities in the workplace. Similarly, Ward (2008:20) suggests that it is not just a matter of invisibility but an added obstacle is that this diversity strand has been silent or been silenced. Klatwitter (ibid) believes that the lack of data in this area is due to the stigma attached to researching sexual minorities. Furthermore, Klatwitter believes that there are a number of barriers that hinder research on sexual orientation including: *‘discrimination against sexual minorities, lack of interest or knowledge, the absence of support for the work, and a scarcity of appropriate models and data.’* (Klatwitter, 1998:55-56). An additional problem has been the potential invisibility of sexuality compared to more visible forms of identity such as race and gender (Clair et al 2005).

The earliest research in the field of sexual minorities focused on discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination in the workplace can be formal and informal (Croteau, 1996). Informal discrimination includes violence against the person, loss of credibility or acceptance or verbal harassment. More formal types of discrimination might include paying someone less due to their sexual orientation or not to promote or hire an individual because of their sexuality. Other formal discriminatory behaviours include being denied promotion, increased job responsibilities and pay rises. These types of discrimination are discussed in more detail below. The concept of discrimination can also

be broken down into distinct types: overt and subtle. Levine and Leonard (1984) defined overt discrimination as formal discrimination against gay and lesbian employees. This includes inequities in pay, job responsibilities, hiring, promotion and termination of employment. Subtle or more informal discrimination, on the other hand, tends to occur during the interactions with others in the workplace. Informal discrimination might include marking difference through jokes based around sexuality or stereotyping, another type might be exclusion through difficulties in gaining access to social networks thus cutting off informal channels of communication. I would argue in line with Pringle and Giddings (2011) that those studies whose main focus has been on issues of discrimination, social prejudice and homophobic attitudes come under the first wave of research. The vast majority of the first wave research covered the period from the early 1980s up to the turn of the century prior to progressive equality legislation with respect to sexual minorities. This first wave highlighted how the workplace was a difficult environment for LGBT people to work in. This first wave of research also includes the issues of disclosure/non-disclosure of a gay identity in the workplace. The second wave of research, on the other hand, focuses on LGBT's experiences in the workplace post liberal, inclusive legislation.

Before discussing the literature on discrimination in the workplace, it is important to define the terms homophobia, heterosexism and heteronormativity which form the basis of discriminatory behaviour. Homophobia was probably the first concept used to explain the reasons why LGB people are discriminated against. According to Herek (2004) and Creed (2005), the psychologist George Weinberg first introduced the term 'homophobia' in the late 1960s. He defined homophobia as the fear or dread of close contact with gay people. When first coined the term represented a conceptual revolution as it repositioned homosexuality as no longer an illness in need of a cure, but as both a societal and an individual problem. Academics have commonly used homophobia as Pringle and Giddings (2011) argue, to refer to individual behaviours and attitudes towards homosexuality. Since the 1990s and especially with the rise of queer theory and postmodernists writings (Ragins and Wiethoof, 2005; Ragins et al, 2007; Creed 2005), there has been a move towards the term 'heterosexism' given the limitations of the term

‘homophobia’. According to Herek (2004), heterosexism is a more appropriate and inclusive concept. The distinction is significant as heterosexism focuses on the privileging and normalising of heterosexuality rather than the fear of homosexuality. It therefore requires a deeper interrogation of institutions and workplaces that support heterosexist prejudice. Heterosexism can be defined as a cultural ideology which is manifested in society’s institutions. It privileges heterosexuality over homosexuality, where heterosexuality is the template that non-heterosexuals should emulate. Heteronormativity, on the other hand, is an extension of heterosexism. Ingraham, who first coined the term, defines it as ‘the belief system underlying institutionalised heterosexuality [that] constitutes the dominant Western paradigm in Western society.’ Ingraham (2006:309). Heteronormativity is a regulatory practice that constrains and limits the expression of non-heterosexual forms of expression. Unlike homophobia, it usually functions in a much more subtle manner, manifested through societal expectations, peer pressure and as a norm of behaviour. It is this concept of discrimination that I aim to take forward in the thesis, exploring how gay men feel pressurised to conform in the ways they manage their gay identity in the workplace.

2.2. Discrimination in the workplace

In order to give some backdrop and context to the ways gay men manage their gay identity in the workplace it is necessary to mine the literature on sexual minorities’ experiences of discrimination in the workplace. An exploration of the literature on experiences of discrimination over the past thirty years is necessary so as to understand better the constraints and freedoms gay men face in their working lives today. It has been argued that there has been limited research on the prevalence of sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace (Welle and Button, 2004). Nevertheless, an electronic search of peer reviewed management literature and published reports indicate that this area of study has been extensively explored over the past thirty years. Although the search I undertook in all likelihood is unlikely to be exhaustive it does give a representative account of sexual minorities’ experiences of discrimination in the workplace. Of course, measures of actual discrimination are difficult to obtain in

organisational settings. Consequently, many researchers have therefore decided to ask gay and lesbian workers whether they feel they have been treated differently to their heterosexual colleagues because of their sexual orientation. The focus has thus been on the respondents' perceived discrimination rather than what might actually be the case.

Some of the earliest studies in 1980s focused on the anticipated fear of discrimination if a gay identity became known to others in the workplace. Levine and Leonard (1984) in the U.S. found in their quantitative study of 203 women in New York City that lesbians anticipated and encountered job discrimination. In fact, over 60 per cent of their sample anticipated discrimination at their workplace if their sexual orientation became known. Such fears were probably justifiable given that nearly 25 per cent of these same women had experienced actual instances of either formal or informal discrimination. These findings were also confirmed in Snape et al's research (1995) in a survey of 116 gay people. They discovered that amongst those who had disclosed their sexuality in the workplace 75 per cent had experienced some form of discrimination based on their sexual orientation, whereas amongst those who were least 'out' only a third had experienced discrimination. Fear of disclosure was a common theme in Greasley and Williams' (1986) study of lesbian and gay employees in public sector white collar occupations in the U.K. Greasley and Williams discovered that more than three quarters of their respondents had chosen not to disclose their sexuality even though 90 per cent of them would have liked to. In a similar quantitative study of 125 lesbian and gay men in a university community in the U.S., D'Augelli (1989) found that the vast majority (3 in 4) of respondents had experienced verbal abuse with just over a quarter being threatened with violence.

These negative experiences are a concurrent theme throughout much of the literature on sexual minorities' experiences of discrimination during 1990s. Snape et al (1995) found that half of the lesbian, gay and bisexual participants in their study in the U.K. had been subjected to discrimination in the workplace. Such discrimination included a wage gap, physical harassment and verbal abuse. Furthermore, some of their male respondents

reported work situations where subordinate heterosexual employees had refused to work under them as they deemed their homosexuality discredited their 'masculine authority'. Snape et al argue that gay men in their survey were under pressure to conform to the expected gender role of masculinity. In a similar vein, a Stonewall report 'Less Equal than Others' (Palmer, 1993) surveyed over 2,000 LGB people in the U.K. The report showed that nearly half of respondents (48 per cent) had been harassed at work because of their sexuality. In the late 1990s a similar report was commissioned by the Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Research (Irwin, 2002) to explore the workplace experiences of 900 gay men, lesbians and transgender people in Australia. The research found that prejudicial treatment was widespread with 59 per cent of participants experiencing discrimination including jokes (54 per cent), unwelcome questions (48 per cent) and ridicule (32 per cent). The research showed that homophobic harassment extended across all occupations and industries, though was more prevalent in male dominated workplaces. Waldo (1999) in the U.S. having noted that the vast majority of the literature on sexual minorities in organisations focused on discrimination explored the impact of discrimination on GLB's welfare. He found that those who had been discriminated against exhibited higher levels of psychological distress and health related problems as well as lower levels of job satisfaction. He also discovered that those who had disclosed their sexuality were more likely to experience direct forms of discrimination and harassment.

Since the turn of the century there have been a number of progressive Acts passed throughout many western countries with the intent of making discrimination in the workplace on the basis of sexuality illegal. It might therefore be assumed that experiences of discrimination experienced by LGB employees would have diminished. Added to which surveys have shown a greater tolerance and understanding of sexual minorities over the past few decades. For example, the British Social Attitudes Survey in 1987 revealed that 75 per cent of people thought that homosexuality was 'always or mostly wrong'. In 1995, Snape et al discovered that this figure had come down to nearly half of respondents. By 2008, The British Social Attitudes Report revealed that this sentiment had more than halved to a minority of 32 per cent now believing that homosexual

relationships are always wrong, with half of respondents regarding them as rarely or never wrong. Furthermore, an online survey of 5,000 people by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) revealed that the overwhelming majority (83 per cent) of heterosexual women and men would be happy or feel neutral about the prospect of working with an openly LGB manager. Likewise a survey in the U.S. (Herek, 2002) revealed that 65 per cent of heterosexual men and 81 per cent of heterosexual women would support the passing of a law prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Despite legal advances and a sea change in attitudes towards homosexuality Ellison and Gunstone (2009) found in a large scale survey in the U.K. that discrimination still impacted on the working lives of LGB people. Reminiscent of findings uncovered in the studies during 1980s there was still a fear that their sexual orientation could lead to prejudicial treatment. Nevertheless, they also found that more than two-thirds of gay men felt that they could disclose their sexuality in the workplace. Ellison and Gunstone conclude from their findings that LGB people are tolerated as long as their sexual orientation is kept a private matter. Of course tolerating LGB employees does not equate to inclusivity or a welcoming environment. As Ellison and Gustone point out, by making a non-heterosexual orientation a private matter it makes it invisible. My research therefore aims to explore, for those who have disclosed their gay identity, whether they are claiming visibility, using disclosure as a means of enacting change in the workplace.

Recent studies in Australia and the U.S. still show widespread discrimination following similar findings in previous decades. For example, The Williams Institute of Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy in the U.S. (Burns and Krehely, 2011) has done studies showing that between 15 and 43 per cent of LGBT employees had suffered some form of discrimination at their workplace. In Australia, Pitts at al (2006) found that 59 per cent of respondents had experienced personal insults or verbal abuse in the workplace. More recently, Barret and Lewis (2011) in an online survey of 152 GLBT respondents in Queensland, Australia found that the majority had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation at either one (34 per cent) or two (34 per

cent) workplaces, where the most frequent types of discrimination were remarks, ridicule and jokes. Surprisingly, Barret and Lewis found that in spite of anti-discrimination laws being introduced in Australia that there has been an increase in incidences of reported discrimination. In a previous study in Australia, Irwin (2002) found 35 per cent of respondents perceived that they had been discriminated against in their workplace. This figure in a similar study carried out by Barret and Lewis had risen to 61 per cent. Consequently, legislation may not necessarily be as effective as might have been anticipated in reducing discriminatory behaviour. Organisations today might be perceived as being more progressive than in the past, nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that attitudes have changed. As Embrick et al (2007) discovered work colleagues' behaviour might change by attempting to hide their animosities. Nevertheless, they found that discrimination towards LGB people had actually increased in their study in the U.S. They discovered that attitudes towards lesbians and gay men are not becoming more progressive.

It is probably not surprising that due to the fear of discrimination Ryan-Flood (2004) in her study of 45 gay, lesbian and bisexual people in Brighton, in the U.K. found that this affected their career choices. In particular, those in higher level jobs in the labour market deliberately made an active choice to work in organisations that appeared to have a more tolerant attitude towards sexual minorities, whereas those in casual employment would change employer when confronted with difficulties at work. A conscious decision to choose occupations that are perceived as more tolerant of sexual minorities was also uncovered in Ellison and Gunstone (2009) study, where 39 per cent of gay men believed that there were some jobs that they would not consider because of their sexuality. In particular, they decided to avoid working in the police force, the armed forces, the teaching profession and in manual trades.

The past three decades would seem to paint a rather bleak picture of the experiences of sexual minorities in the workplace. As Lewis (2009) states given the vast majority of studies reporting negative workplace experiences the reader might come to the conclusion that non-heterosexual identities lack any positive organisational experiences.

A recurring theme throughout the past three decades is the fear of disclosing a gay identity in the workplace. Snape et al (1995) argue that the restrictions and accommodations that gay men face in the management of their gay identity is probably the most pernicious effect of discrimination. The backdrop to discrimination is as Snape et al discovered how gay men and lesbians feel obliged to conform in the ways they present themselves, avoiding any overt sexual behaviour in public. Many of their respondents adopted an accommodating low key stance. Pressures to take this stance are supported in their survey of 619 heterosexual men and women, where more than half believed that although gay or lesbian employees should not be dismissed from their workplace because of their sexuality the proviso was as long as gays or lesbians did not speak openly about their sexuality. A repeated theme in Snape et al's report is the social pressures their respondents faced in how they managed their gay identity. Many of them would take a low key accommodating stance with regards to their sexuality in order to 'fit in' within their organisation. The challenge that I have set myself is to explore whether gay men still feel under pressure within their organisation to conform in the way they manage their sexual identity. Given, as outlined above, changes in social attitudes towards homosexuality and the introduction of anti-discriminatory laws it would be interesting to investigate whether gay men are being more assertive, challenging discrimination and heteronormativity in the workplace.

As Jenkins (2008:43) argues, identification by others has consequences. One of these consequences is possible pay discrimination. One of the limitations of the studies outlined above has been the difficulty in measuring actual discrimination in the workplace. As discussed above the focus has been on respondents' perceived discrimination rather than what might actually be the case. Economists have tried to address this issue by using a tangible measurement; pay differentials between heterosexuals and gays and lesbians. Overall, these studies suggest that the effects of sexual orientation have some impact on earnings. Badgett 1995; Black et al 2003; Carpenter 2005; Berg and Lien 2002 and Blandford 2003 all use data extracted from the General Social Survey (GSS) in the U.S., though they used slightly different time frames during late 1980s and 1990s. Apart from Carpenter, they found a pay differential between

self-reported gay men and heterosexual men ranging from 11 to 27 per cent. Carpenter, on the other hand, who extracted data from GSS solely from California, found that there was no statistically significant or economically independent effect of a gay sexual orientation on earnings. Clain and Leppel (2001) and Allegretto and Arthur (2001) drew similar findings using data from the 1990 census of population in the U.S. They discovered a wage gap of between 2.4 and 16 per cent.

There has been little research done by economists on pay discrimination outside the U.S. The few European studies in this area, Arabsheibani et al (2005) in the U.K., Frank (2006) in the U.K. and Plug and Berkhout (2004) in the Netherlands all found a negligible pay gap between heterosexual and homosexual men. Plug and Berkhout in their study of Dutch university graduate leavers, for example, found that gay men earned 2-5 per cent less than their heterosexual counterparts. Frank (2006) found from data collected from the U.K. Association of University Teachers Survey in 2000-1 that LGB staff suffered no significant discrimination in salaries compared to heterosexuals. Nevertheless, Frank found evidence of discrimination in promotion with a significant under-representation in the top ranks, where he believes a 'glass ceiling' exists for gay men.

A dilemma that has vexed many of these economists has been the issue of defining sexuality. As Black et al (2003) stressed what it means to be gay or lesbian or even bisexual is subject to considerable interpretation. Amongst researchers no single set of criteria for defining sexual orientation is universally accepted. This means that identifying gay, lesbian and bisexual employees is more problematic and ambiguous than classifying individuals by race, gender or other minority status. This point is reinforced by Arabsheibani et al (2005) who highlight the fact that there is still no standard definition of homosexuality, thus making it difficult to ask questions about this issue. The lack of a definitive definition of homosexuality has created more questions than answers. It could be argued that a homosexual is an individual who self-identifies as a homosexual. On the other hand, it could be defined, as Badgett (1995) has done in terms of sexual practice and behaviour. Badgett (1995) identifies lesbian, gay or bisexual

respondents as those who have had at least as many same sex partners as opposite sex partners since the age of 18. By identifying sexuality by a person's behaviour, this raised further questions in its definition. Is someone a homosexual who has had one same sex sexual experience, or should it be more? Does the length of the relationship matter? Furthermore, the problem with this definition of sexuality is the assumption that sexuality is static. Studies of sexual behaviour provide substantial evidence that sexual desire and activity are not static across a life time, and homosexual and bisexual activity is not uncommon in early adulthood (Kinsey et al 1953). As Carpenter succinctly puts it:

'Difficulties arise because human sexuality is characterised by a complex set of relationships, among attraction/desire, behaviour/experience, and identity/orientation.' Carpenter (2005:259)

The argument being raised here is that sexual behaviour and sexual orientation are not perfectly correlated. A large number of so called 'straight' men and women have had or have same-sex sexual experiences. However, Blandford (2003) believes that relying on the entire history of each person's adult sexual behaviour is more likely to increase the likelihood of defining a non-heterosexual identity rather than someone who experiments sexually before settling into a monogamous heterosexual union. Nevertheless, Badgett (1995) bases her definition of sexuality on the respondents' behaviour rather than self-identification as gay. The problem with Badgett's definition of sexuality is that a number of individuals may have had same sex partners in the past but are now heterosexually partnered. Another concern raised by using Badgett's definition of sexuality through sexual behaviour, is how to differentiate between people who consider themselves bisexual and those who would consider themselves gay or lesbian, since these groups have very different labour market experiences. Added to this, it would seem less likely that those who are now in a heterosexual partnership would experience discrimination or other workplace effects related to sexual orientation. Consequently, identifying respondents as homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual is much more complex and this requires more than a single standard question as would be the case in asking about one's ethnicity or age. Many qualitative studies on the experiences of LGB individuals strive to overcome this problem by using self-definition of sexuality in their sample, recognising the fluidity of sexual identities.

A key limitation of these studies is that they focus only on one aspect of discrimination, that of pay. Pay discrimination does not show the full nature of discrimination. It might just be the tip of the iceberg. Discrimination in the workplace can take many forms such as bullying, isolation, intimidation, exclusion, marginalisation, reduced promotion prospects, employer bias in hiring to name but a few. These studies do not differentiate between individuals, their circumstances nor do they reveal the feelings and personal experiences that sexual minorities face on a daily basis.

There has been less research on discrimination on the basis of hiring, all of which has come from countries outside the U.K. As Croteau (1996) highlights, virtually no research has specifically examined the effects of sexual orientation on the evaluation of job candidates by selection professionals. This is rather surprising given as Croteau (1996) believes that work related discrimination experienced most often by gay, lesbian or bisexual participants involved employer decisions to fire or not to hire them due to their sexual orientation. The most recent studies by Weichselbaumer (2003) in Austria; Horvath and Ryan (2003) the U.S. and Van Hoyer and Lievens (2003) Belgium, have all used real life experiments to examine if hypothetical gay or lesbian candidates with the same work related qualities as heterosexual candidates would be judged less favourably in a personnel selection context. Both Weichselbaumer and Horvath and Ryan's study found that gay and lesbian applicants were treated less favourably than heterosexual ones. Van Hoyer and Lievens, on the other hand, found that sexual orientation did not have a significant main effect on hiring ratings.

2.3. Educating others about a gay existence

A number of researchers (Humphrey 1999; Bowen and Blackmon 2003; Creed and Scully 2000; Bernstein, 1997, Creed et al 2010) have attempted to answer the question as to why sexual minorities decide to disclose their sexual orientation. A common strand amongst these studies is that sexual minorities may use disclosure as a form of political agency. 'Coming out' is perceived as a powerful means of effecting social change. In fact, Peel (2002) in agreement argues in her study of lesbian and gay educational trainers

that ‘coming out’ and exposure to lesbians and gay men is an efficacious method to bring about social change. Likewise Bowen and Blackmon (2003) argue that disclosure may lead to a reduction in ignorance and prejudice in the workplace. Humphrey (1999) identified three reasons why people choose to ‘come out’ in the workplace: (i) the personal level, which involves being honest to others and integrity, (ii) the professional level, so that individuals can form closer bonds with work colleagues, and (iii) the political level, where individuals wish to educate others about a non heterosexual existence. Humphrey interviewed 23 activists in the U.K.’s largest union, UNISON. They were all employed in public sector occupations. Unlike most previous research, all of Humphrey’s respondents were ‘out’ at work and had been for a considerable amount of time. Although all her respondents had disclosed their sexual identity, this was not without paying a heavy penalty. Her respondents experienced some of the most blatant forms of discrimination. Three had been discharged from the army on the basis of their homosexuality, three had been ‘outed’ by the U.K. national press, one had been transferred to another location because of her colleague’s homophobic attitudes and finally, one gay man had been dismissed primarily because of his colleagues’ attitudes towards homosexuality and AIDS. Humphrey (1999:134) concluded that being ‘out of the closet’ was still a hostile place where gays and lesbians had to manage a difficult balancing act *between being out and pursued for their specialist knowledge and out and persecuted for their presumed perversities*. It would be interesting to see in what I classify as the second wave of research, after progressive liberal legislation, whether gay men still experience the same levels of direct discrimination after disclosing. Certainly one would expect less formal forms of discrimination in the military especially given the Ministry of Defence’s policy change on openly gay personnel in 2000¹. This study aims to pick up on this theme to explore whether gay men feel they can push the boundaries in shaping and modifying the labels and meanings ascribed by others in the workplace. Humphrey touches on the way her respondents tried to educate others about a non

¹ In September 1999, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that investigations by military authorities into a service person’s sexuality breached their right to privacy. As a result, the MOD lifted the ban entering the military from 2000 onwards. The MOD’s policy since 2000 is to allow openly gay men to serve openly. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is now forbidden. In fact, the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force were recognised as two of the top 100 employers of 2012 in Stonewall’s workplace equality index.

heterosexual existence. This thesis explores this idea to see whether gay men feel they can be more assertive and forthright in how they manage their gay identity in light of changes in social attitudes and recent legislation since Humphrey's research.

At around the same time as Humphrey's study, other researchers picked up on this political level, where individuals seek to educate others about a non heterosexual existence. For example, Creed and Scully (2000) in the U.S. and in Creed, DeJordy and Lok's later study (2010), attempt to theoretically explain why GLBT workers disclose their gay identity. They argue in their study of 66 GLBT employees that there are three main motives for disclosure which they categorise as; encounters, educative encounters and advocacy. Encounters, according to Creed and Scully are pivotal moments where GLBT people can effect social change. A claiming encounter requires a GLBT person to state and own a gay identity. This might involve a GLBT employee casually dropping in references to their sexuality in an everyday encounter. An example of this would be where a gay man would talk about his private life, his partner or how he spent his weekend in a casual matter of fact way. An educative encounter is where GLBT person explains to a work colleague some aspect of their identity that they might not have been aware of or might have misunderstood. Educative encounters require GLBT individuals to challenge myths and stereotypes as well as highlighting social injustices around sexual orientation. The main focus of educative encounters is to teach others about sexual minorities' worldview. Finally, an advocacy encounter is one that seems more radical than an educative one. Here the individual highlights and raises a perceived inequity however small and seeks redress through organisational policy or a change in attitudes. In Creed and Scully's work the distinctions between the different types of encounters are not clearly laid out. In fact, they freely admit that the boundaries between the three kinds of encounters are blurred.

In a similar vein, Bernstein (1997) explores the different strategies that four lesbian and gay campaign groups in the U.S. use in effecting social change in the workplace. She noted a continuum of identity deployment strategies enacted by her respondents ranging from education to critique. Identity for education draws similarities to Creed and Scully's

later study in what they term 'claiming encounters'. This type of identity challenges negative stereotypes about gay people or heteronormative assumptions. The strategy aims to challenge heteronormativity and the dominant culture within organisations. However, identity for education Bernstein argues focuses on looking for common ground or likeness with the heterosexual majority. The limitation of this approach is by focusing on issues of sameness and a strategy of normalising a gay identity is that it does not confront dominant norms head on. Identity for education restricts the possibility of problematising the norms and morality of the dominant culture – the source of most discrimination. Identity for critique, on the other hand, is a more radical confrontational approach. This is where individuals or activists do not seek to behave or act in line with mainstream culture, but emphasise and celebrate their difference. The approach is rooted in oppositional cultures confronting head on the practices and values of the dominant culture. The dilemma is finding the right balance between claiming common ground (a sameness approach) to reduce any stigma attached to a gay identity and at the same time highlighting a gay identity's distinctiveness (a difference approach). Bernstein's study explains the motives behind why gays and lesbians choose to reveal their sexuality in the workplace. She argues that the rationale is to change heterosexual people's perspective and at the same time to assert their identity in order to challenge social norms that are the main source of discrimination.

Other researchers (Snape et al 1995, Wilson and Miller, 2002) rather than exploring why sexual minorities choose to reveal their sexual identity in order to effect social change investigate how LGBT people respond to discrimination in the workplace. Parallel studies have been undertaken into response to discrimination in other diversity strands (Boykins and Toms (1985) on race and Hyers, (2007) on gender for example). A common pattern emerging from this literature was that these studies identified coping strategies lying on a continuum ranging from active to passive responses to discrimination. Snape et al for example, place responses into two distinct categories, active and passive. A passive response in their research is characterised as someone who would try to ignore discriminatory behaviour in the hope that the perpetrator would tire of harassing. Active personal responses, on the other hand, would be where an individual

would reply to verbal abuse or would purposefully make it clear to the discriminator that their behaviour was unacceptable. These respondents in many respects draw similarities to Creed and Scully's concept of 'claiming encounters'. Typically they would make it clear that they had no issue with their sexuality and would thus refuse to be intimidated by others who tried to make it a problem. One of the weaknesses of these studies is that they ignore the social context in which these respondents work. The social and organisational contexts are possibly powerful influential factors in whether an individual is able to choose either a passive or active response to discrimination.

Wilson and Miller (2002) also identified a range of coping strategies in dealing with heterosexism in the workplace. In their study in the U.S. of 37 African American gay and bisexual men they uncovered six management strategies in dealing with discrimination along the active-passive spectrum. They characterised a passive response as one in which an individual would attempt to maintain a quiet and reserved demeanour when listening to homophobic comments made by heterosexual co-workers. Typically these respondents would not challenge the perpetrator choosing instead to suffer in silence. At the other extreme, there were a few individuals in Wilson and Miller's study who stood their ground. These respondents chose to confront discriminatory behaviour directly refusing to back down. In their conclusion, they note that the coping strategies gay and bisexual men used varied along multiple continua. The coping strategies were not mutually exclusive. One of the weaknesses in their study is that they fail to address the motives behind why individuals chose certain coping strategies. As in the case of Creed and Scully's work outlined above, Wilson and Miller seem to ignore the impact of social and organisational context in which these individuals 'chose' how to deal with homophobia.

2.4. Disclosure / non disclosure of sexual orientation in the workplace.

The majority of research on sexual minorities in the workplace has focused on the issues surrounding the disclosure / non disclosure of sexual orientation in the workplace. Much of the previous literature comes from the U.S. As Creed and Cooper (2008) have noted self-disclosure and nondisclosure of a gay identity has been the unifying theme in

research on LGBT people. I would argue that this research comes under what I would classify as the first wave of studies into the experiences of LGBT employees in the workplace. Centred around the first wave of research are the dilemmas around managing a predominately invisible identity, the strategies in dealing with a gay identity and the consequences in revealing. The vast majority of this literature (Woods and Lucas 1993; King et al 2008; Chrobot-Mason et al 2002; Shallenberger 1994; Ward 2008; Ragins et al, 2007; Ragins, 2008) has been heavily influenced by Goffman's theoretical work on *Stigmas* (1968). Goffman put forward two concepts, *discredited* and *discreditable* identities. According to Goffman individuals who possess an obvious or visible stigma have a *discredited* identity, whereas, those who have an invisible or concealed stigma have a potentially *discreditable* identity. Much of the previous literature has focused on how individuals manage such discreditable information about themselves and their consequences. Goffman argues that in voluntarily disclosing discreditable information one is exposing oneself to uneasy situations to manage. Goffman's theory of stigma management raises useful questions for this research. Is it still the case that gay men who disclose their gay identity face difficult situations to manage as Goffman theorised half a century ago? Is a gay identity still perceived as a discreditable identity by others in the workplace? Do gay men, as stigma theory predicts, still feel a need to hide their gay identity particularly where they perceive negative consequences of disclosure?

Probably the first major piece of research on the dilemmas surrounding disclosure / non disclosure of a gay identity was Woods and Lucas's study (1993) of the professional lives of gay men in the U.S., succinctly described in the title of their book 'The Corporate Closet'. Woods and Lucas's work explored the different strategies that gay men used in managing their gay identity. They identified three key strategies: counterfeiting, avoiding and integrating. Counterfeiting is where an individual creates a fake heterosexual identity. An avoidance strategy would be where a gay man deliberately reveals nothing about their sexual identity through self-editing any information about their private and personal lives. Such a strategy makes the individual appear in the eyes of others asexual. Integrating, on the other hand, is where an individual reveals his gay identity and tries to manage the consequences. Of the 70 respondents they interviewed, the vast majority

chose either a counterfeiting or an avoidance approach. Chrobot-Mason et al (2002) in the U.S. explored the relationship between the strategies identified by Woods and Lucas and the influence of organisational climate and the perceived consequences. Their results showed that gay and lesbian employees were more likely to adopt an integrating strategy when they have higher sexual identity achievement and perceive a supportive organisational climate, 20 years later this thesis aims to explore whether these two approaches are still favoured by gay men.

Much of the literature on disclosure/nondisclosure has focused on the factors that have facilitated disclosure. Creed and Scully (2000) found that one important factor in their preliminary research was the method of disclosure. King et al (2008) took this research further by examining two characteristics of disclosure: timing of disclosure and method of disclosure and climate in which disclosure occurs. They discovered that timing of disclosure was a key factor in the disclosure experience. The longer a gay co-worker waited to disclose his gay identity the less positive their experience. Furthermore, the directness of disclosure had a significant positive impact in the response from others. Probably the greatest weakness, probably due to their over reliance on Goffman's theoretical work on stigma management, underlying King et al's approach is an assumption that gay employees have significant degree of agency and power in determining whether a positive or negative outcome is achieved. In fact, King et al recognise in their conclusion that context was the most salient factor in determining whether gay men achieved a positive experience in their disclosure. A supportive workplace far outweighed the manner and timing of disclosure.

Schope (2002) in the U.S. also explored the factors influencing disclosure decisions. Like previous research, they focused on the perspectives of gay men in finding out the reasons why they disclosed their sexual identity. Schope found that the most important factor in deciding whether to 'come out' was age. Schope concluded that even though there have been dramatic shifts in public attitudes towards homosexuality, those born before

Stonewall² tended to be the most closeted irrespective of the organisational climate compared to the younger generation. This study picks up on the issue of age to explore whether this is a factor in how gay men manage their gay identity in the workplace. Schope noted that older gay men tended to carry internalised homophobia, burdened with self-hatred and fear. As a consequence they were less able to take advantage of this new age of tolerance.

A key criticism of the literature surrounding the disclosure / non disclosure of a gay identity is the over simplification of the 'coming out' process. It assumes a straightforward dichotomy of either one is 'out' or not. Day and Schoenrade in the U.S. (1997, 2000) were possibly among the first researchers to discuss disclosure as a continuum. Ward in the U.K. (2008) in a similar vein argued that 'coming out' is a process and a repeated act rather than a one-off event. Nevertheless, Day and Schoenrade's work primarily focuses on the link between disclosure and commitment to the organisation. They found from a survey of 744 gay employees that more openly gay employees showed greater commitment, higher job satisfaction, lower role conflict and lower conflict between home and work. Similarly, Griffith and Hebl in the U.S. (2002) found in their study of 220 gay men and 159 lesbians that disclosing was closely linked to higher job satisfaction and lower job anxiety. However, these findings raise more questions than answers. Why do gay men choose to disclose their gay identity? What does disclosure mean? Does disclosure just mean informing others of one's sexual orientation or does it mean expressing one's sexuality in the same manner as heterosexual co-workers? This research sees disclosure primarily from the perspective of the discloser. However, it also raises questions over what are the reactions of co-workers to this information?

There has been some research (Woods and Lucas 1993; Shallenberger 1994; Burke 1993; Humphrey 1999; Rumens and Kerfoot 2009; Ferfolja and Hopkins 2013) on gay men in professional occupations. Previous research shows how gay men have had to struggle

² Stonewall here refers to the riots in the summer of 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, New York City against the persecution of sexual minorities. The Stonewall riots have become the defining event spawning the gay civil rights movement in the U.S.

between their professional identity and their gay identity. There have also been a number of studies of gay men working in public sector professions such as local government (Humphrey, 1999 in the U.K.), teaching (Knopp 1999; Rofes, 2000 both in the U.S.), policing (Burke 1993 in the U.K.; Miller et al 2003 in the U.S.) and the NHS (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009 in the U.K.). Both Rumens and Kerfoot 2009 and Humphrey 1999 found that gay and lesbian respondents had to compromise the way they managed their gay identity. They argue that sexual minorities are affected by the dominant expected professional norms and discourses of heteronormativity. The effect meant that gay men and lesbians have to separate their homosexuality from their professional lives, as if the two are incompatible or as Rumens and Kerfoot (2009:763) argue are perceived as polar opposites. This point draws similar conclusions in Humphrey's study:

'In regards to professionalism – the onus is now upon lesbians and gays to leave their homosexuality at home and to ensure that their professional clothes double up as personal closets, in order to preserve the heterosexual hegemony of the occupation. Humphrey (1999:146)

This thesis aims to explore the theme surrounding the dilemma of managing a professional identity and a gay identity. The study aims to take this research further by exploring whether a gay identity raises questions around authority. The study aims to shed light in this neglected area to investigate whether authority is compromised in the eyes of others because of their sexuality.

In addition, previous research of a qualitative nature has predominately explored the experiences of solely gay professionals. This thesis aims to investigate a wide range of occupations from blue collar manual occupation to senior professionals. In so doing, I aim to make comparisons between different occupational groupings. Previous research has suggested that gay men and lesbians might congregate in certain occupations and are more likely to be located in urban areas. Badgett and King (1997) in the U.S., for example, discovered that gay men tended to cluster more in what were perceived as more tolerant occupations. In my research I aim to obtain a wide range of occupations beyond what might be considered as stereotypically gay jobs.

2.5. Silence in the workplace

As discussed earlier in section 2.2, although there has been a decline in direct formal discrimination on the basis of sexuality, there still exists a prevalence of more subtle forms of discrimination. One such subtle form of discrimination is the issue of silence that sexual minorities have experienced in the workplace. Indeed previous literature has raised the issue of silence experienced by lesbians and gay men (Hall 1989; Day and Shoenrade 1997; Ragins and Cornwell 2001; Shallenberger 1994; Woods and Lucas 1994; Ward and Winstanley 2003; Creed, 2003). Hebl et al (2002) in their field study noted how more overt, formal displays of discrimination are becoming less frequent whereas more subtle forms of discrimination still exist. They found that there was no difference in recruitment rates of lesbian and gay men but that employers tended to speak fewer words in selection interviews and engaged in more non verbal discrimination with gay and lesbian applicants compared to heterosexual applicants. Of course silence around non-heterosexual experiences is nothing new as typified in the well-used phrase ‘the love that dare not speak its name’. Silence takes on many facets as Ward and Winstanley (2003) have highlighted. One such facet is when silence is used to suppress minority voices by not giving the oxygen for certain things to be raised in conversation. Coming from a similar angle, Bowmen and Blackmon (2003) argue that LGB employees may feel unable to express their opinions or disclose their sexual identity as they perceive there is a negative prevailing climate of opinion towards gay identity. They argue that gay men remain silent when they perceive an unfavourable climate towards homosexuality. This perpetuates what Bowmen and Blackmon (2003) refer to as the ‘spirals of silence’. On the other hand, if gay men believe that there is a supportive attitude towards sexual minorities they are more likely to speak up. In a similar vein, a heteronormative culture within organisations according to Bell et al (2011) can also silence sexual minorities. A heterosexist environment can encourage organisational climates of silence to develop. In such climates they argue there is a sense of futility and resignation amongst sexual minorities in speaking up. In addition, as outlined in section 2.2 on the experiences of discrimination in the workplace, many gay employees fear disclosing their sexual identity or speaking up as they fear harassment and possible discrimination. A common theme in

all these studies is how silence as a form of suppression comes predominately from the organisations themselves and their cultures.

Likewise, Willis (2011) in his study of young Australians (18-26 years of age) noted how silence was a persistent theme in the respondents' accounts. Willis, in line with the theoretical debates and empirical findings outlined in the previous paragraph found that silence was organisationally based. Heteronormativity silenced minority voices through cultural symbols such as the provision of uniforms that diluted differences or in the lack of any recognition of LGB workers and their relationships in Personnel policies. Similarly, Rofes (2000) in his personal account as an openly gay teacher in the U.S. expressed how he felt silenced in the way he could manage his gay identity in order to fit in to the normative expectations of a secondary teacher. The pressures to conform to gender stereotypes Rofes refers to as like being 'bound and gagged'. Similarly, Ferfolja and Hopkins (2013) found in their study of 14 lesbian and gay teachers in Sydney, Australia that respondents experienced silence around their sexuality in the workplace. Silence as suppression by others probably takes its most extreme form when organisations use their power and control to actively silence oppositional voices. Ward and Winstanley (2003) cite an example in one of their so called 'progressive' case studies where a gay manager was relocated within his organisation as he was seen as too impartial in dealing with the organisation's response to section 28 of the local Government Act (the impact of legislation is discussed in section 2.8).

Another facet of silence uncovered in Ward and Winstanley's (2003) study is reactive silence and the absence of response from heterosexual workers. Their findings revealed that respondents' disclosure of their sexual orientation was often greeted with silence from others in the organisation. Of course, it might be the case that others might not have reacted because they were genuinely not concerned or interested in the respondent's sexuality. Willis in Australia uncovered more or less identical findings. Others reacted to a co-worker 'coming out' with silence. Of course, it is difficult to explain why others react in this way. Willis interprets the absence of response as a form of resistance to the visible presence of LGB identities in the workplace. Ward and Winstanley, however,

were able to obtain an insight as to why others reacted in this way. They managed to conduct mixed focus groups relaying stories of how individuals had been greeted with silence to their 'coming out'. They asked the focus groups why they would react to sexual minorities with silence. In one of their focus groups respondents compared the awkwardness of talking to a gay man about his weekend with that of dealing with a work colleague coming back to work after bereavement leave. Ward and Winstanley go further than Willis' interpretation of silence as resistance arguing instead that such silence is actually a form of hostility. Ward and Winstanley cite the example of one of their respondents who had previously been married to a woman and had decided to 'come out' as a gay man to his work colleagues. This respondent noticed the contrast in how others reacted to his gay identity. Previously work colleagues would show interest in his private life as a heterosexual married man. This interest was now lacking after he had revealed his new identity. The absence of any acknowledgement or response to his gay identity made him feel different, abnormal and excluded. In line with Ward and Winstanley, Willis recognises the powerful effect silence can have on sexual minorities, rendering them invisible. As Willis states, an absence of any response to the disclosure of a gay identity leaves the discloser in an awkward position with no acknowledgement of how that information has been perceived. Given the two-way process of identity work, the intersection of how we see ourselves and how others see us, the absence of any response from others makes it difficult to know how that identity has been interpreted. As Day and Schoenrade (1997) state:

It is normal for co-workers to have some degree of knowledge about their colleague's personal lives and this knowledge can be critical in establishing the trust upon which networking and mentoring are built. If the homosexual workers are unable to communicate a relevant part of their personal and social identities, true identification might not take place. (Day and Schenrade, 1997:148)

Similarly, Ward and Winstanley point out the constraints that sexual minorities face in their identity work if their identities are silenced.

'By not being talked about, events are starved of the oxygen which would breathe life into them and give them meaning. By ignoring alternative sexualities, makes it more difficult for sexual minorities to construct an 'out' social identity.' Ward and Winstanley, (2003:1269)

Of course, silence can also come from sexual minorities themselves. In many respects, silence is very much a double edged sword. As Ward and Winstanley (2003) point out sexual minorities have a degree of agency in how they use silence within organisations. Silence can be used by sexual minorities as a form of empowerment at the same time it can be used by others as a form of oppression. How is this so? As previous researchers have found LGB employees may choose to adopt a strategy of silence in what Bell et al (2011) refer to as taking a *defensive voice*. Here sexual minorities decide to use silence around their sexuality to protect themselves from potential discrimination and harassment. Bell et al argue that sexual minorities choose to adopt this approach as the personal consequences of speaking up might be detrimental. In a similar vein, Woods and Lucas (1993) found that some of the professional gay men in their study would use silence in what they term an *avoidance tactic*. Here silence is used in order to hide a gay identity in the workplace or even to 'pass' as heterosexual. The result of this strategy as Bowen and Blackmon (2003) later observe is only to exacerbate a spiral of silence. This point is highlighted in Woods and Lucas's study:

'Because he uses an avoidance strategy, Russ may never know his own co-workers' opinions about homosexuality. As the silence becomes more conspicuous the spiral perpetuates itself. The penalties for breaking it seem only to increase.'
Woods and Lucas (1993:157)

Bell et al (2011) speculate that another reason why sexual minorities decide to remain silent around their sexuality in the workplace or choose not to speak up against heterosexist discourses is because they feel a sense of resignation. Bell et al name this form of silence as acquiescent voice. Sexual minorities adopt a passive approach accepting that discrimination and harassment is inevitable and that there is little chance of any improvement in changing discriminatory behaviour.

On the other hand, Ward and Winstanley (2003) argue that sexual minorities' decision to remain silent around their sexual identity may not necessarily be due to a sense of conformist resignation. They argue that GLBT employees may use silence as a form of

passive resistance. By refusing to collaborate with heteronormative discourses sexual minorities are able to have some control over how they shape their sexual identities. As Ward and Winstanley (2003) argue adopting a passive resistance stance makes it much *harder for others to do battle with something that is not tangibly present*.

The diagram below summarises the main sources of silence mined from the literature.

Organisational Silence

**Prevailing negative org
climate (Bowmen &
Blackmon, 2003)**

**Silence as suppression
(Bell et al, 2011,
Bowmen & Blackmon,
2003, Rofes, 2000)**

**Reactive silence (Ward
& Winstanley, 2003)**

**Resistant silence
(Willis, 2011)**

Silence from sexual minorities

**As passive
resistance
(Ward, 2003)**

**Defensive silence
(Bell et al, 2011)**

**An avoidance
tactic
(Woods & Lucas,
1993)**

**As acquiescent
voice (Bell et al,
2011)**

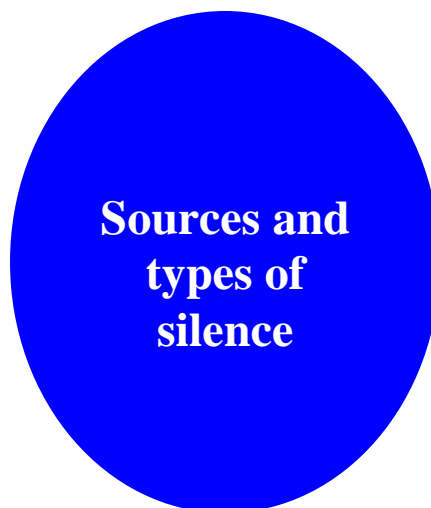


Figure 1: Sources and types of silence in the workplace

2.6. The salience of context

With regards to gay identity management, the degree to which individuals have freedom and autonomy in shaping their identities is very variable. What it means to be an openly gay man and the reactions and responses of others is very much dependent on individual circumstances. A point that has been noted by Jenkins (2008) is that:

'It is one thing to be a gay television producer, another to be a gay doctor and quite another to be a gay clergyman. Being gay in London, with a flourishing and supportive gay scene, is likely to be quite different to being gay in say, a rural village in Norfolk.' Jenkins (2008:100)

This argument is similarly put by Beasley (2008:172), who reiterates the point that individuals do not have equal choice in how they manage their identities. It is not just a question of submission to social conformity that makes some gay men refrain from contesting/challenging their gay identities. Differential economic and other material social constraints limit their room for negotiation. Thus it is easier to be 'out' or be more divergent from expected gender norms in some occupations than others. It depends, for example, on position in the organisation, whether a newcomer to the workplace, to what extent one is a visible minority in the organisation, how much job security one has as well as the power to name just a few variables. Some gay men are more vulnerable and have more at stake than others in how they manage their identities at work. Previous research (Ragins and Cornwell 2001; Ragins, Cornwell and Miller 2003; Croteau, Anderson and VanderWal 2008; Colgan et al 2007, 2009a; Chrobot-Mason et al 2001; Griffith and Hebl 2002; Day and Schoenrade 2000) has explored the link between social context/working environment and the degree to which LGBT respondents feel able to disclose their sexual identity in the workplace. These studies have taken a comparative approach. Different variables have been explored and their impact on gay identity management including: top management support, diversity policies, organisational climate, the impact of anti-discrimination legislation and the support of allies and co-workers. Nearly all of these studies have taken place in the U.S., except for Colgan et al's (2007, 2009a) research done in the U.K. All of this previous research has been heavily influenced by the concept of 'managing diversity' (Thomas, 1990) and the business case

for diversity. The premise behind the business case for diversity that has spurred a growth of studies in this area is the assumption that there is a positive correlation between a favourable organisational environment and an individual's commitment, job satisfaction and performance.

One of the key variables that previous studies had explored was the link between supportive organisational cultures or 'gay friendly' workplaces and reported incidents of discrimination as well as their impact on gay identity disclosure. Surprisingly, although the term 'gay friendly', a term that originated in the US, has become a phrase in common usage in the English language there has been no common consensus on its definition amongst academics. Probably because the term is so broad, it lends itself to many interpretations. Giuffre et al (2008) in their study of 'gay friendly' organisations in the U.S. define the term as one in which lesbian, gay and bisexual people are accepted and welcomed in the workplace. An acceptance of LGB people, however, as Colgan et al (2008) points out does not necessarily mean that an organisation embraces and engages with sexual minorities or actually prevents homophobic attitudes across the workplace. Correia and Kleiner (2001:95) define a gay friendly organisation as one that fosters an atmosphere considered hospitable to LGB employees. In both Colgan et al's (2011) and Giuffre et al's study (2008) they found that LGB respondents defined the term as one in which heterosexual co-workers do not discriminate against them. Tolerating sexual minorities and perceiving an organisation as non-discriminatory are at their essence capturing a rather basic, limited definition of a 'gay friendly' organisation. Furthermore, as Gedro (2013) argues in her case study analysis of Lord John Browne the CEO of BP, who felt compelled to resign after the disclosure of his sexuality, a company might claim to be 'gay friendly' as in the case of BP but may still be a difficult place for LGBT people to come out. Stonewall, the LGBT lobby group in the U.K. in their Stonewall Equality Index (2010) define the term more broadly to include the degree in which organisations are actively supportive of LGB employees. They evaluate how 'gay friendly' an organisation is against the following criteria; organisational policies on tackling discrimination against LGB staff, the level of seniority of LGB champions, the existence of an LGB employee network, diversity training on LGB issues, visible gay

role models and openly LGB people at senior level. There is some overlap here with Correia and Kleiner's definition of a 'gay friendly' organisation, where they suggest that the characteristics of a 'gay friendly' organisation should include company policies on sexual orientation, LGB support networks, diversity training on sexual orientation and outward support for LGB communities. Probably because of the broadness and lack of clarity over the term 'gay friendly' Ragins and Cornwell (2001) use the term supportive environment instead. Ragins and Cornwell (2001) define a supportive environment as one which included; diversity training on sexual orientation, the provision of same-sex domestic partnership benefits and an organisation that encourages or supports a LGBT networking group. They discovered that supportive policies and practices had a positive correlation on the levels of reported discrimination. Indeed, they found that organisational policies and practices had the most significant impact on perceptions of sexual orientation discrimination than all other contextual variables. Similar findings were uncovered in both Griffith and Hebl's research (2002) and in Chrobot-Mason's findings (2001) where they found a strong link between the perceived organisational climate and the ways that gay men manage information about their sexual identity. Griffith and Hebl (2002) found that where an organisation was perceived to be supportive of gay employees the more likely these employees were to disclose their sexual orientation to co-workers. In a similar vein, Driscoll et al (1996) discovered a relationship between gay identity disclosure and organisational climate. They concluded that gay employees were more likely to disclose their sexual orientation in organisations that were deemed as supportive of gay employees. Woods and Lucas' (1993) research on professional gay men in the U.S., unlike the findings outlined above, deduced that organisational climate and policies had little bearing on the identity management strategies adopted by respondents in their study. They discovered that some of the most closeted were employed in relatively 'gay friendly' organisations whereas some of the most open and vocal worked in homophobic environments. They concluded that other factors might come into play other than organisational climate and policy in influencing identity management strategies. The vast majority of the literature outlined above has primarily focused on the link between disclosure/non-disclosure of a gay identity and work environment. This study explores whether contextual factors have given gay men

the confidence to educate and challenge others in the workplace when faced with issues of discrimination. Given the quantitative approach taken by the majority of previous studies there has been little comparative research focussing on the different circumstances and experiences that individuals are faced with.

Previous literature has explored the role of co-workers on LGB identity management. Ragins and Cornwell (2001), for example, exploring the issue of work group composition found that gay employees were much more likely to report discrimination in organisations that were predominately heterosexual. Whereas in organisations where gay employees had a gay supervisor or where there was a high proportion of gay work colleagues respondents reported less workplace discrimination.

2.7. The Impact of LGBT networks on gay identity management

There has been a dearth of research on the impact and contribution organisational LGBT networks have had on LGBT employees. This is probably due to the fact that LGBT employee networks are relatively new compared to other diversity strands. As Colgan et al (2007) point out the establishment of LGB employee networks was primarily spurred on by demands for equal opportunities policies to include sexual orientation in the late 1990s. In addition, organisations have increasingly felt the need to develop a diverse and inclusive workforce. Hence the creation of LGBT networks was a logical progression of these policies. Colgan et al's (2007, 2012) research was one of the very first in the U.K. to explore the impact and contribution LGBT networks have made in effecting change within organisations. Through in-depth interviews with 149 LGB employees within 14 U.K. case study 'good practice' organisations they found that these networks served a number of important functions. One of the main functions these networks presented was the ability of individuals to network with other LGBT colleagues. The significance of this function was that it allowed LGBT employees the opportunity to discuss concerns and problems they may have experienced based around their sexuality. In addition, the presence of these networks not only helped LGB employees to disclose their sexuality, but also gave them more confidence. A further function identified in Colgan et al's study

that LGBT networks served was its supportive role. This was where respondents felt they could use the LGBT network to provide assistance and support when required. One of the key outcomes of the networks was that they provided a means of enabling individuals to feel comfortable in their organisation. This was particularly the case for those respondents who were not 'out' and felt the need to talk through the problems they were facing around their sexuality with those with a sympathetic ear. Colgan et al also briefly identify how LGBT networks provide LGBT mentoring and training programmes. They conclude that training and mentoring schemes provide a mechanism for individual and collective voice as well as raising non-heterosexual visibility within organisations. Nevertheless, they do not probe deeper to explore how mentoring and training programmes impact on how LGBT employees manage their identity in the workplace. In contrast, Griffith and Hebl (2002) noted that gay in-company networks and diversity training awareness courses made little impact on perceived workplace discrimination.

Hebl, Tonidandel and Ruggs' (2012) study in the U.S. also explores the impact gay/lesbian mentoring programmes have on gay and lesbian employees. The focus of the study was an investigation on the effectiveness of like-mentors on job-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, promotion and salary. They found that gay and lesbian protégés with gay or lesbian mentors had greater job satisfaction and more job involvement, but most significantly they had positive role modelling and gay-specific advice. It would seem that the inspirational aspect that a like-mentor served had the most powerful impact on protégés. The underlying premise was that if a gay mentor had achieved success in the organisation so could they. Although their research gives us a greater understanding of the effectiveness of like-mentor programmes on job-related outcomes, we are none the wiser as to whether gay/lesbian mentoring actually impacts upon how LGB employees manage their sexual identity in the workplace. Do mentoring programmes give gay men greater confidence in how they manage their gay identity in organisations? Do these programmes enhance the visibility of gay men and give them a greater voice?

In Shallenberger's study of twelve openly gay professional men (1994) in the U.S., although he does not explore the impact of LGBT employee networks he nevertheless

uncovered an informal ‘old boys network’. Seven out of his twelve respondents had used their gay contacts and had actively fostered relationships with influential others in order to enhance their career. Similar findings were uncovered in Rumens’ (2011) study of 12 gay and lesbian professionals. He noticed that making friends with other openly gay men in more senior positions opened up opportunities including the establishment of formal mentoring arrangements. Even so, there still seems to be a gap in the literature regarding the impact of LGBT networks and mentoring on gay identity work in the workplace. Do these networks and mentoring opportunities have an effect on how gay men see themselves and how they present themselves to others in the workplace? How do gay men use networks to raise their visibility and voice within organisations? These are questions that I aim to investigate in this study.

2.8 Legislation

In light of recent anti-discrimination legislation introduced in the U.K. and in some states in the U.S., there have been some exploratory studies investigating the impact such protective legislation has had on LGBT employees. Prior to this legislation as Skidmore (2004) has pointed out in his comparative research of U.K and German legal case study, judicial discourse in court judgements have favoured heteronormative practices at the expense of sexual minorities. Both Ragins and Cornwell (2001) in the U.S. and Colgan et al (2009) in the U.K. explore whether respondents in their samples were more willing to take up a grievance in the workplace or even felt empowered to litigate if necessary. At the beginning of this century there have been four important pieces of legislation with the intent of giving greater protection to LGBT citizens in the U.K. including: the repeal of Local Government Act: Section 28 (2003) and the introduction of the Employment Equality (SO) Regulations (2003), the Civil Partnership Act (2004) and the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2010), which makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation in gaining access to goods, facilities and services. These Acts are discussed in greater depth below.

Section 28 of the Local Government Act was enacted in 1988. Section 28 prohibited the 'promotion' or the publishing of any materials with the intended purpose of 'promoting' homosexuality. The amendment to the Act also stated that schools should not 'promote' the teaching of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship. Although no local authority had ever applied the legislation to prosecute, as Stonewall (2000) states, its effectiveness was the fear it placed on both organisations and individuals to comply. Stonewall (2000) reported how a number of councils had frozen funding to lesbian and gay organisations due to concerns that supporting such bodies might be interpreted as 'promoting homosexuality'. Ellis and High (2004:214) add that the impact of Section 28 had a powerful symbolic effect in reproducing inequality and prejudice both inside the classroom as well as in society at large. Of course it is not possible to isolate the impact of Section 28 taking into account other social and political changes that were taking place at the same time. Nevertheless, As Stonewall (2000) has pointed out, Section 28 had the effect of 'silencing teachers' and pupils' voices during the period that it was enshrined in law. Given the repeal of Section 28 in 2003 in England and Wales, it would seem timely to investigate whether gay men might feel they can be more open and assertive in the ways they manage their sexuality in the workplace. Even so, Greenland and Nunney (2008) argue that the negative effects of Section 28 still remain. Questionnaire data from 39 secondary school teachers in Wales from their research revealed that nearly half of respondents were unaware of the repeal of the Act. Furthermore, many teachers in their survey believed that Section 28 still affected their practice and the way they dealt with issues around homosexuality in the classroom years after the Act had been repealed. It would be interesting to explore whether gay men feel they have a voice since the repeal of the Act or if they feel they still have to tread a careful path in how they manage their gay identity, particularly those who work in the education sector.

A further piece of legislation deemed as a move towards greater lesbian and gay equality was the introduction of the Civil Partnership Act 2004. The Act grants civil partnerships in the U.K. with rights and responsibilities identical to civil marriage. These rights include; same property rights, social security and pension benefits, tenancy rights, full

life insurance recognition and next-of-kin rights in hospital as well as responsibility for a partner's children. It might be expected that the Civil Partnership Act has had the effect of normalising a gay identity. In fact, Harding (2008) discovered through interviewing ten lesbian and gay men that although all of her respondents supported the introduction of civil partnership for same-sex couples there were concerns raised by some of these respondents that civil partnerships might lead to the assimilation of lesbians and gay men into heteronormative ways of living. This study aims to explore what impact civil partnerships have had on normalising a gay identity in the workplace. In particular, the Civil Partnership Act raises a number of questions that this thesis wishes to investigate; Do gay men who are in civil partnerships feel it has diminished their difference with their heterosexual colleagues? And what are the reactions and responses of others in the workplace to those who have recently entered civil partnerships?

The Employment Equality (sexual Orientation) Regulations came into force in December 2003. This piece of legislation banned discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment. The Act was implemented primarily due to pressures from the E.U. to comply with the 2000 E.U. Employment Framework Directive that required member states to ban sexual orientation discrimination in employment by the end of 2003. This legislation specifically bans direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation because of sexual orientation. Nevertheless, this legislation still permits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation by religious organisations. In October 2010 the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations were replaced by provisions in the Equality Act 2010. The new legislation provides protection to sexual minorities throughout the entire employment relationship – from recruitment to dismissal. The ban on sexual orientation discrimination applies to terms and conditions, pay, transfers, promotions, training and dismissal. The Act not only consolidates many of the protections against discrimination in employment but in addition includes the provision of goods and services. Since the Act was introduced there have already been a number of employment tribunals where employers have been found to have discriminated against gay staff. Stonewall (Dick, 2010) for example, reported a successful tribunal case where a media sales manager was awarded £120,000 under the Employment Equality Act 2010.

More recently, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2012) reported a successful challenge of the Equality Act 2010 where a gay lawyer took his law firm to tribunal (Bivonas V. Bennet, 2012) over homophobic discrimination. In addition to these successful Tribunal cases, Colgan et al (2007) found in their sample of 154 LGB employees working in 16 case study 'gay friendly' public sector organisations that around two-thirds of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were more likely to take up a grievance over LGB discrimination in light of the Employment Equality (SO) Regulations. Nevertheless, only a third of respondents in the same sample believed that recent U.K. legislation had made a positive difference in their respective organisations. In fact, these respondents took a cynical stance towards the impact of legislation on organisational policy and practice. The general view was that the Regulations set out only the minimum requirements and served little more than a safety net rather than creating a platform for changing the existing organisational culture or a basis for good practice. On the other hand, Ragins and Cornwell (2001 in the U.S.) explored whether anti-discrimination legislation had any impact on the organisational culture. They found in their sample of 534 gay and lesbian respondents that protective legislation had made some impact in that respondents perceived significantly less workplace discrimination compared to those working in organisations where no such anti-discrimination legislation prevailed. Nevertheless, although Ragins and Cornwell found that there was a link between legislation and perceived workplace discrimination, they discovered that organisational policies and practices were much more important factors. They concluded that protective legislation was not enough on its own to reduce discrimination in the workplace. Outside the U.K., Connell (2012) in the U.S. explored the impact of diversity policies specifically on LGBT employment discrimination had on disclosure issues. She compared the policies at both local and state level in California, entrenched in more gay-friendly policies, with Texas that has a more gay hostile policy context. In her qualitative research of 45 primary and secondary school gay and lesbian teachers she discovered that state and local policies had made little impact with respect to either workplace inequality or disclosure decisions. As with Greenland and Nunney's (2008) findings, Connell discovered that many of the teachers in her research were not fully aware or clear about their legal rights. Furthermore,

Connell came to the conclusion that although anti-discrimination policies might have some bearing on the 'coming out' process, it was only one part of a number of interrelated factors. The challenge that I have set myself is to explore in what I would term the 'second wave' of research post equality legislation, whether this new legislation has given gay men more self-confidence in the ways in which they manage and disclose their gay identity in the workplace. In the next subsection I explore the literature around gay men's experiences of working in male dominated masculinised occupations.

2.9. Gay men's experiences of working in male dominated 'masculinised' occupations

There have been a number of studies that have explored gay men's experiences of working in male dominated and/or 'masculinised' occupations. One of the main areas of focus has been the police (Miller et al, 2003 in the U.S.; Burke, 1993 in the U.K., Rumens and Broomfield, 2012 in the UK and Ward, 2008 in the U.K. [Ward also studied the sexual minorities' experiences of working in the fire service]. It is probably not surprising that the police have been given particular attention as an area of study as the common perception is that the police are one of the main bastions of heterosexual masculinity. Indeed, Ellison and Gunstone (2009) in their survey of LGB people found that respondents identified policing as having an inherent culture of masculinity and a poor image of homophobic behaviour. In fact, Miller et al (2003) suggest that policing is an occupation that is both sexualised and gendered. This is manifested in displays of heterosexual masculinity. Both Rumens and Broomfield (2012) and Miller et al's (2003) study in the police found that a particular form of masculinity was emphasised based upon toughness, physical strength, physical aggression, control and competition. Similarly, Ward (2008) noted how police work is closely linked with the body and its performance. In each study drawing upon in-depth interviews they noticed a pervasive theme of having to prove masculinity. All these studies reported how displays of non-normative masculinity would raise questions around a gay policeman's ability to perform effectively on the job. This was particularly so in aspects of the job that might be deemed

‘tough’ such as dealing with confrontation on the streets. A common strand in these studies was how gay police officers would adopt a normalisation strategy in the management of their gay identity. Some respondents would be conscious of the way they used their bodies to perform masculinity. Respondents in Rumens and Broomfield’s (2012) research would try to emulate normative standards of masculinity. In Miller et al’s study respondents would go even further by overemphasising their strength and toughness in order to be accepted in the profession. Both studies identified issues of exclusion, marking of difference and the subordination of non-normative forms of masculinity.

Ward’s (2008) findings draw similarities with Miller et al’s (2003) study in the U.S. of gay and lesbian police officers. They discovered that ‘closeted’ police officers felt pressurised to conform to models of hegemonic masculinity. This is illustrated in a response from one of the gay police officer respondents:

‘And as you well know, everyone wants to be accepted and if making fun of gay people gets you accepted, then you make fun of them.’ Miller et al (2003:366)

The above example illustrates, in the case of certain occupations such as the police force, how subordinated forms of masculinity through hegemonic masculinity are deemed inferior and are stigmatised, so much so that respondents were willing to hide their sexuality by ridiculing other gay men and by doing so give complicit consent to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. Miller et al (2003) noted that even those police officers who were ‘out’ felt obliged to conform to hegemonic masculine behaviour in order to prove their competence in the job. In a similar vein, Ward (2008) in his study of a rural police force in the UK noted how the police are associated with masculinity. Police officers had to perform normative masculinity in order to be taken seriously by both fellow police officers and the public. These studies raise important questions for this research. This study aims to explore whether gay men who work in more ‘macho’ male dominated occupations feel under greater pressure to conform in the way they present themselves.

Pressures to conform to traditional notions of masculinity were not just confined to the Police. Ozga and Walker (1999) argue that heterosexual masculine characteristics are qualities sought in managerial positions. They argue in their study of public sector organisations that the rise of managerialism has brought with it the formation of a particular type of masculinity characterised as being ‘competitive, ritualistic, un-reflexive and false.’ (1999:107). Badgett and King (1997) and Colgan et al (2009) both found evidence of discrimination and harassment being more prominent in manual labour and male dominated workplaces. In fact, in Colgan et al’s (2009) study, of 77 in-depth interviews with LGB employees working in public service ‘good practice’ organisations, they noted that the most extreme examples of discrimination came from those working in male dominated work environments. Probably unsurprisingly these respondents expressed a greater fear in disclosing their gay identity. Furthermore, as with the findings uncovered around gay identities in the police, Colgan et al and Badgett and King’s evidence illustrates the way LGB employees have to modify their behaviour in order to fit into a masculine heteronormative environment. Similarly, Galloway (2011) in her study of gay entrepreneurs noted how the business world is constructed around heterosexual masculine norms of behaviour. Galloway concludes that although gay men might be able to disclose their sexuality in the workplace there is still the proviso that an openly gay identity requires conformity to heteronormative modes of behaviour to be accepted and deemed credible in the business world.

A common theme extracted from this literature, particularly in the U.K. was even though these studies were based on ‘good practice’ public service organisations (Colgan and McKearney, 2009 and Rumens, 2011) with awards for diversity in relation to sexual orientation these organisations were still difficult places for gay men to work in. In addition, these studies took place after anti-discrimination laws and equality acts had passed through Parliament. Despite this backdrop this did not necessarily mean equality and inclusion. On the surface there was an outward appearance of equality access but underneath there appeared to be entrenched heteronormative modes of behaviour reinforced through traditional notions of masculinity. These studies suggest that male

dominated 'masculinised' occupations are still difficult environments for gay men to manage and disclose their sexual identity in.

A further obstacle that impeded disclosure they discovered was working in manual-labour occupations. Similarly, Ragins and Cornwell (2001) found that respondents reported more heterosexism in male dominated work teams or where they had a male supervisor. This thesis aims to explore the impact of work group composition on gay identity management in my work. This study aims to compare different work contexts and occupations. There has been little research on the presence of non-LGB workers who are gay supportive or allies and their impact on gay identity management. Interestingly, Croteau, Anderson and VanderWal (2008), suggest that allies might play an important role in supporting gay co-workers, intervening and challenging discriminatory incidents on their behalf. However, although they highlight the importance of supportive allies, they do not explore this theme in any depth. Nor do they have any empirical data to support their supposition. My work picks up this theme and aims to shed light on a relatively unexplored area. Through qualitative analysis, I aim to uncover critical incidents where supportive co-workers have intervened and challenged discriminatory homophobic behaviour. I also aim to explore whether such interventions have made respondents more confident and assertive in how they manage their gay identity in the workplace.

2.10. Humour

Previous research has highlighted how humour has been used as a means of policing heterosexual hegemonic masculinity. Oerton (1996), for example, noted how male dominated organisations are oppressively heterosexual and homosocial. Oerton argues that this is manifested through sexual banter and joking, which are all of a heterosexual leaning. A compounded issue is that gay men are normally excluded from participating in heterosexual male humour added to the fact that such humour is more likely to be at the expense of gay men. Evidence of the powerful impact of humour in the workplace was brought to the fore in Collinson and Collinson's (1989) study of skilled engineers. In a

similar vein, Cockburn (1991) observed how sexual humour was used as a means of subordinating women and gay men. Likewise, Hearn (1985) noted the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity in male dominated workplaces demonstrated through humour in what Hearn refers to as *horseplay*. Collinson (1988) argues that humour can serve as a form of control to maintain a particular form of masculinity. Although these studies do not directly explore the impact of humour on gay identity work, they do reveal the powerful effects that humour can have in maintaining hegemonic (heterosexual) masculinity. Surveys have shown that anti-gay jokes and comments are pervasive in the workplace. Barret and Lewis (2011) in Australia, for example, found that more than half their GLBT respondents had heard or been the target of anti-gay jokes. Similarly, research commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (2008) (the largest LGBT civil rights organisation in the U.S.) found that 61 per cent of LGBT workers had heard someone at work make derogatory remarks or jokes about LGBT people 'at least once in a while'. Probably more surprising was that 55 per cent of respondents heard these jokes worked in companies that had sexual orientation diversity policies in place. It would be interesting to explore how gay men react to anti-gay jokes and also how they use humour in their gay identity work.

Collinson (1988) in his study of shop-floor culture noted how humour could also be used to foster conformity. Collinson observed the social group pressures individuals were under to conform. Some of his respondents admitted that they partook in 'macho joking' as a performance in order to comply with the demands of the culture. Using Collinson's concept of humour as conformity, a mining of the literature on sexual minorities shows examples of how LGBT people would conform in both how they used humour and also how they responded to it. Woods and Lucas (1993) cite the example of one of their respondents who would pander to his co-workers' stereotypes about homosexuality by making fun of effeminate men. Other respondents in Woods and Lucas' (1993) study would use humour in order to desensitise or de-stigmatise their sexuality in the eyes of co-workers, particularly when they perceived that work colleagues showed discomfort towards them. Woods and Lucas found that using humour was a means of normalising their gay identity by making homosexuality 'less of a big deal' (1993:185). Hyers (2007)

in her study of the reactions to racism, sexism and heterosexism by women noted how they would use humour and laugh with the perpetrators in what Hyers interpreted as a non-assertive approach. It would be interesting to explore how gay men use humour and whether they use humour as a defensive strategy.

To summarise, a mining of the literature has shown that humour serves a number of purposes as illustrated in the diagram below.

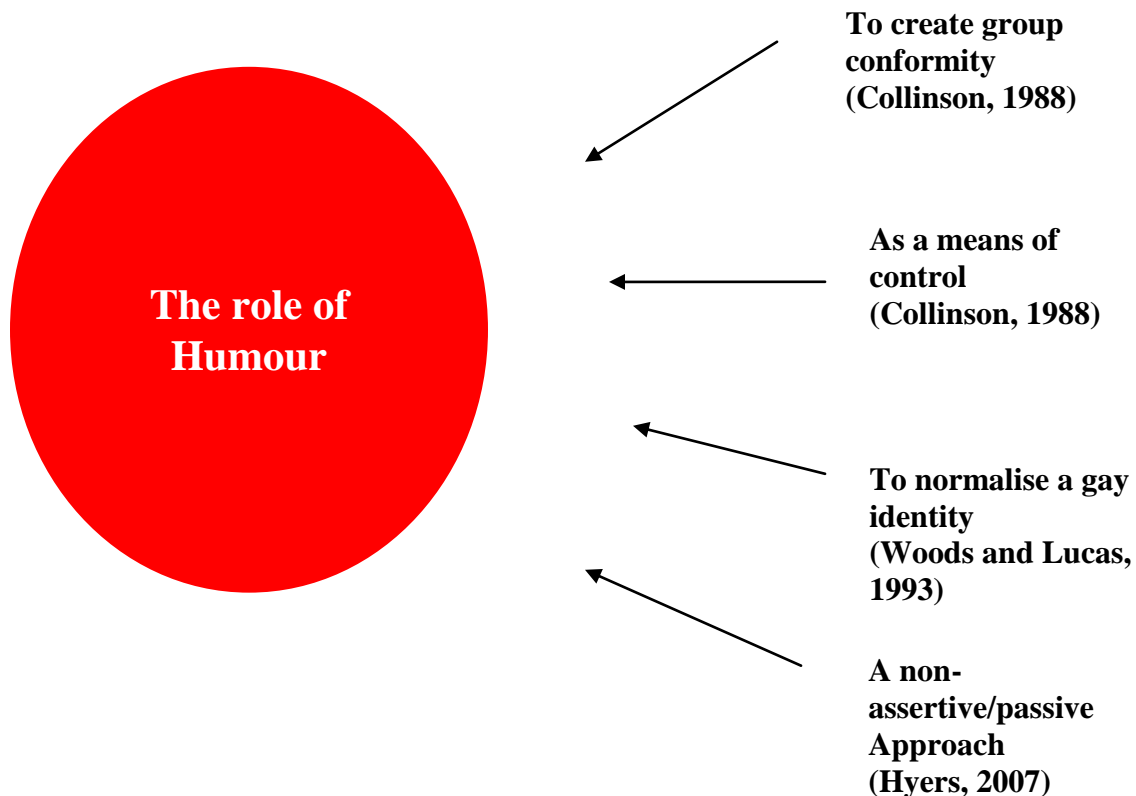


Figure 2: The role of humour in interaction with others.

2.11. Expressing sexuality in the workplace

During the 1980s a new school of thought developed problematising the Weberian theoretical approach which tended to view organisations as sex and sexuality neutral. This new approach comes under the umbrella term as the sexuality in organisations

perspective (Burrell and Hearn 1989; Pringle 1989; Collinson and Collinson 1989). This perspective has revealed the extent to which as Cockburn (1991) argues organisations are 'profoundly heterosexualised' or as Burrell and Hearn (1989:21) state '*heterosexuality and heterosexual relations are the dominant forms in most organizations.*' Similarly, Pringle (1989) notes how day-to-day life in organisations is relentlessly heterosexual. Hearn (1985) argues that explicit displays of sexuality in the workplace in most organisations are in the majority of cases heterosexual. Woods and Lucas (1993:22) in agreement with this perspective argue that workplaces are profoundly sexual places. They argue that sexuality is either implicitly or explicitly displayed through jokes, flirtatious behaviour, gossip, in our self-presentations and in the clothes we wear. In fact, more recent research has supported these earlier findings. Displays and expressions of heterosexuality in the workplace are commonplace as Ward and Winstanley (2003:1270) have observed, manifested through wedding rings, talk of husbands and wives and pictures of children displayed in offices. Equally, Loannou (2001:32-3) noted how the dominance of heterosexual discourse at JP Morgan made it difficult for him to manage his gay identity. In a similar vein, DeJordy (2008) questions the norms and values in organisations where heterosexuals may express their sexuality but sexual minorities may not. DeJordy cites an example where it might be deemed the norm for heterosexual employees to embrace and show affection to their wives and husbands in the company lobby, whereas gay men might refrain from such behaviour even though they have disclosed their sexual identity at work. This study picks up on the sexuality in organisations perspective and investigates whether gay men feel they are able to express their sexuality in the workplace in the same manner as their heterosexual counterparts. Previous literature on sexual minorities up until the beginning of this century could be classified as the 'first wave' of research in a period where organisations were difficult places for gay men to be. This research focused on the concepts of disclosure/non-disclosure and the strategies around managing a potentially stigmatised identity. The first wave studies also explored issues of discrimination, homophobia and inequalities in the workplace. Since sexual minorities have increasingly been given rights and recognition in the public sphere the focus of research has moved to a 'second wave'. This second wave I would argue needs to explore whether gay men feel more confident and assertive in how

they manage their gay identity in the workplace. I aim to explore whether gay men feel they can express their sexuality in subtle ways in the same manner as their heterosexual counterparts.

Hearn (1985) found that in male dominated institutions such as prisons, armies and in shop floor manual work, a particular form of (heterosexual) masculinity was performed. This was displayed in what Hearn termed as 'horseplay'. The men in Hearn's research would show overt and aggressive displays of macho masculinity in order to mark or distinguish themselves as 'real' men. Those who did not participate in such behaviour would be deemed as 'wimps' or questions would be raised about their sexuality. Hearn argued that the men would use their heterosexuality to sustain or reinforce their power and in particular male power. Similarly, Collinson and Collinson (1989) observed dominant displays of male heterosexuality amongst manual shop floor workers working in the components division of a lorry producing factory. Collinson and Collinson noted how discourses around men's sexuality characterised typical interactions and everyday life. This was illustrated through discourses of male sexual prowess, sexual jokes and the adornment of female nudes on the factory walls. There was significant pressure to conform and join in with such discourses and banter or otherwise face the risk of one's masculinity being questioned.

'It was considered 'normal and 'natural' for men to talk explicitly about sexuality. Failure to participate raised serious questions about the deviants' masculinity.' Collinson and Collinson in Hearn et al (1989:95)

This raises useful questions for my own research. Although Collinson and Collinson's findings are now over twenty years old, I aim to investigate whether such dominant heterosexual discourses still prevail in male dominated manual occupations. Collinson and Collinson recognise the pressures to conform to a particular form of heterosexual masculinity. My work aims to explore whether gay men feel under pressure or a need to downplay their sexuality in such work environments. Collinson and Collinson's study solely focuses on male heterosexual relations and discourses. They do not explore the voices of sexual minorities. In fact, Burrell and Hearn (1989:21) recognise in their

research on sexuality in organisations that their focus is predominately on heterosexuality and heterosexual relations. Burrell and Hearn justify their focus on heterosexuality as it is the dominant form in most organisations. My work aims to shed more light on this previously neglected area of study and to give voice to gay men. My work aims to add to this debate to explore whether gay men feel they can disrupt or challenge dominant heterosexual discourses in their workplaces.

Explicit displays of heterosexuality are not just confined to male dominated manual occupations. Gutek (1989:63) discovered in her primarily quantitative survey of 1,232 respondents in a wide range of occupations in Los Angeles that common behaviours included; the telling of sexual jokes, use of explicit sexual terms and displays of sexual posters by many men at work. Similarly, Woods and Lucas (1993) noted in their study of professional gay men in the U.S. the double standards even where more subtle implicit expressions of sexuality are displayed.

'Jeff knows a wealth of details about his boss, Jack. He knows where Jack's kids attend school, their ages, even the fact that the youngest daughter is dyslexic. He remembers where Jack's wife spent her last three vacations... Yet for three years Jeff has carefully avoided revealing anything about his weekend plans, the bars or clubs he frequents, even the fact that he is single....the resulting double standard compels the sexual silence of some while condoning the ceaseless displays of others.' Woods and Lucas (1993:60)

Similarly, Ward and Winstanley (2003:1256) note the double standards in their research on sexual minorities in organisations. They cite the contradiction where displays of heterosexuality in the workplace are commonplace so much so that it:

'can lead people to feel that it is the homosexual's sexuality that is of no interest to other people rather than sexuality in general'. (2003:1256)

Previous research has highlighted what Hearn (1989:23) refers to as heterosexual hegemony. This is where the power of heterosexual discourse constructs other sexualities as 'isolated exceptions' so that sexual minorities' sexuality is perceived by many heterosexuals as a private and individual concern. Ward and Winstanley (2003:1256) in agreement note the contradictions in their research of organisations in the U.K. A

recurrent theme in the literature (Ward 2008; Cockburn 1991; Ward and Winstanley 2003; Hearn 1985; Connell 2005) is the issue of 'flaunting one's sexuality'. In each of these studies, it might have been permissible to be gay as long as others were not reminded about it. Although there was an acknowledgement in these studies that gay men had a right to exist, the proviso was as long as a person was discreet and did not 'flaunt it', kept his relationship to himself and did not talk about his lifestyle. Humphrey (1999:139) in her research of the experiences of lesbian and gay men in public service occupations adds to this standpoint by noting the contradiction where on the one hand it may increasingly be acceptable to be gay in the workplace, but on the other hand sexuality is still perceived as located within the private domain. Similar findings were uncovered in previous research, (Woods and Lucas 1993; Shallenberger 1994; Williams, Giuffre and Dellinger 2009; Ferfolja and Hopkins 2013; Rumens 2005; Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009), where they noted that gay men tried to make a clear distinction between their private life and their working life. My work picks up on this theme to explore whether gay men perceive their sexuality as a private issue. Twenty years on since most of these studies brought to the fore the issue of (gay) sexuality as a private concern, do gay men perceive that they or their work colleagues still view their sexuality in this manner?

Rumens and Kerfoot (2009:776) noted how some respondents in their qualitative research in the South of England would try to make a distinction between their gay and professional identity. This was highlighted in the comments of two of their respondents:

'Gordon suggested: 'I don't think sexuality should come into professionalism.' Speaking in the same vein, Tony (hospital doctor) advanced the view that the 'openly gay professional' ought to treat his sexuality as a 'personal matter'. Even though these interviewees are 'openly gay' in the workplace, these comments imply that the expression of gay male sexuality should be limited to the private sphere of life.' Rumens and Kerfoot (2009:776)

Even in perceived 'gay friendly' organisations, studies (Williams et al, 2009:36; Wood and Lucas, 1993; Gedro, 2013) have shown that sexual minorities have suppressed expressing their sexuality in the workplace. Woods and Lucas (1993:179) noted that even in an environment where there was a perceived absence of a threat of discrimination and

where others seemed genuinely interested and supportive, in their sample of professional gay men, they were wary and reluctant to make explicit and unambiguous mention of their sexuality. The challenge I have set myself is to explore against a backdrop of changes in social attitudes towards homosexuality and recent legislation whether gay men feel they can be more forthright in how they express their sexuality in the workplace. Do gay men particularly in professional occupations feel that they have to downplay their sexuality?

2.12. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the experiences that sexual minorities have faced in the workplace over the past 30 years. The table below outlines the key concepts and themes that will be taken forward into my investigation in how gay men manage their gay identity in the workplace. In particular it raises questions that I aim to address in my fieldwork and empirical findings. An umbrella theme that ties all the areas of investigation is to explore how gay men react and respond to issues of discrimination, silence, dominant heteronormative discourses, humour and pressures to conform to normative forms of masculinity. Given the backdrop of recent progressive legislation in the U.K. and changes in social attitudes towards homosexuality I aim to explore whether gay men are using the opportunity presented to them to be more vocal and assertive in the ways they present and manage their gay identity in the workplace.

The next chapter outlines and unpacks the key theories and concepts around identity that make up my conceptual framework.

Table 1: Key themes and concepts to take forward as lines of enquiry in my thesis

Examples of previous literature of sexual minorities' experiences in the workplace	Useful concepts to take forward into my research	Lines of investigation	Linked to research objectives
Humphrey(1999), Bowmen and Blackmon(2003) Bernstein (1997)	Disclosure as a form of political agency – 'claiming visibility', educating others, 'claiming encounters', education to critique.	What are gay men's motives for disclosure of a gay identity in the workplace? Are gay men using disclosure as a means of effecting change and to shape and modify the labels and meanings ascribed by others?	What self-presentation strategies do gay men use in managing their identity in the workplace?
Snape, Thomson, Chetwynd (1995), Wilson and Miller (2002)	Active to passive responses to discrimination - coping strategies along multiple continua.	How do gay men respond to discrimination in the workplace? What strategies do gay men adopt in managing their gay identity?	What self-presentation strategies do gay men use in managing their identity in the workplace?
Burrell and Hearn (1989), Pringle (1989), Collinson and Collinson (1989)	Sexuality in organisations – relentless displays of heterosexuality.	How do gay men respond to dominant heterosexual discourses? How do gay men express their sexuality in the workplace? Do gay men see their sexuality as a private matter?	What self-presentation strategies do gay men use in managing their identity in the workplace?
Miller, Forest and Jurick (2003) in the U.S., Burke, (1993) in the U.K. and Rumens and Broomfield (2012), Ward (2008)	Male dominated workplaces - having to prove masculinity, conformity to normative masculinity	What pressures do gay men experience in gay identity management working in male dominated workplaces/occupations? What issues do gay men confront for those who have to exercise authority?	How do different organisational contexts impact upon the ways gay men manage their gay identity and how problematic do disclosure issues remain?
Colgan et al (2007, 2012), Shallenberger (1994)	LGBT networks - 'Old boys network'	What effect do networks and mentoring opportunities have on how gay men see themselves and how they present themselves to others	How do different organisational contexts impact upon the ways gay men manage their

Rumens (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal gay contacts. 	in the workplace? How do gay men use networks to raise their visibility and voice within organisations?	gay identity and how problematic do disclosure issues remain?
Collinson (1988) Woods and Lucas (1993) Hyers (2007)	Role of humour as conformity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - as a means of control - to normalise a gay identity - a non-assertive/passive approach 	How do gay men use and respond to humour in the workplace based upon their sexuality?	How do gay men work upon, challenge, conform to, modify and resist the identities, labels and stereotypes ascribed by others?
Ward and Winstanley (2003), Ozbilgin, Beauregard and Surgevil (2011)	Role of silence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - as a form of empowerment - to suppress minority voices 	How do gay men use and experience silence in the workplace?	How do different organisational contexts impact upon the ways gay men manage their gay identity and how problematic do disclosure issues remain?

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

Introduction

3.1. The significance of Identity

Identity is important as it is the key mechanism by which we categorise people. The issue of identity is central to our understanding of how individuals relate to groups and organisations in which they participate. It is a means not just of defining difference and similarity but also the way in which people are placed in hierarchies, are marginalised and discriminated against. As Jenkins states:

'Identification matters because it is the basic cognitive mechanism that humans use to sort out themselves and their fellows, individually and collectively.'
(Jenkins 2008:13).

Sexuality is one of the key identifiers used to make a distinction, to signify similarity or difference.

There is a debate within the literature over whether sexual identities are biologically determined (essentialism) or whether they are socially constructed (social constructionism). The essentialist perspective (Beasley, 2008) broadly perceives sexual identities as fixed. The underlying premise is that sexuality is universalised and biologically determined. Consequently, societies consist of people who are either heterosexual or homosexual with possibly some bisexual people. Social constructionism, on the other hand, refutes the universal or natural status of sexuality. Furthermore, social constructionists (Ragins, 2004) believe that sexual identities rather than being fixed are in actual fact constantly in flux. A key underpinning argument raised by social constructionists (Weeks, 1995) is that the meanings ascribed to homosexual behaviour are culturally specific and vary enormously across different cultures and throughout different historical periods. One of the key limitations of the essentialist perspective was the linking of sexual behaviour with sexual identities, where individuals are categorised

as homosexual or heterosexual on the basis of whether they engaged in sexual practices with someone of the same biological sex. By linking sexual behaviour with identity it ignores the fact that individuals may engage in same sex practices without perceiving themselves as gay. Probably the most influential theoretical piece of work that spawned the social constructionist school of thought was McIntosh's (1968) article, 'The Homosexual Role.' In this article, McIntosh pointed to the historical and cultural impact on the making of the homosexual role. According to McIntosh the homosexual was the creation of the attitudes and expectations of social values surrounding same-sex desire.

Nevertheless, identity is also important as it gives us a sense of who we are and gives meaning to our individual experiences. As Homfray (2008) observed in his research, the terms 'gay' or 'lesbian' were used with relative ease. In addition, as Beasley (2008) points out sexual essentialism still remains the dominant way of thinking or the 'common sense' belief of how we understand sexuality in western cultures. Even though identity may be described as an error (Butler 1990), it is a necessary one (Weeks, 1995), since identity feels real and is important to individuals. Weeks though recognising the paradox of sexual identities, adds that such fixed identities are necessary for they give us a sense of security and comfort. Furthermore claiming a sexual identity enables the identity to be visible. For many gay men, a label such as 'gay' or 'queer' allows them a voice to challenge and subvert oppressive representations. These labels are a means of challenging political and cultural hegemony. Identities therefore serve a purpose as a basis for political power. As Sinfield (1998) argues, asserting essential sexual identities as biologically determined might strengthen the case against homophobia. Furthermore, without a gay identity it makes it difficult to challenge heteronormative values. How can social change with regards to attitudes towards homosexuality come about without identity labels? Identity movements have been effective as illustrated in Gay Pride events and social campaign groups such as Stonewall. Even Weeks (1995:37) who questions the necessity for sexual identities as 'necessary fictions,' comes to their defence.

'If we deny their validity too completely are we disempowering ourselves from the best means of mobilising for radical change?' Weeks (1995:37)

Dismissing identity categories, particularly of minority oppressed groups relegates them to invisibility, a counterproductive strategy. Consequently, without such identities it would be difficult to obtain rights and protection within the law. In addition, many gay men are actively reclaiming a gay identity, not just as a political statement but also as a liberating experience to overcome the marginalisation and repressiveness of heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity. Some Postmodernist thinkers, however, such as Butler (1990), argue to the contrary that identity categories such as 'gay' or 'lesbian' are unnecessary as they only put limits on people who are thus forced to accept polarised identities. According to Butler, identities rather than advancing their causes actually do them a disservice as identity labels such as 'gay' or 'straight' play into the hands of essentialist binary common sense constructions under the assumption that such binaries are natural and fixed. Consequently, Butler believes that a gay identity delimits resistance to sexuality norms. I would suggest that Butler's de-recognition of identity labels creates significant practical problems in its application, particularly if one wishes to investigate issues of marginalisation and discrimination experienced by gay men. As mentioned above, many gay men commonly use fixed identity terms to self-identify. Furthermore, as sociological researchers such as Whisman (1996) have discovered, most gay men do not primarily view their sexuality as 'chosen' or 'socially constructed' as many postmodern thinkers have suggested. Nevertheless, it should be clearly stated that sexual identities are not wholly biologically driven. Even so, if we refute the notion of fixed identities such as 'gay' or 'lesbian', others will create the idea of fixity. For as Gamson points out:

'You may wish to reject the idea of fixed identity, but those who would discriminate against you in organisations will soon give you one.' Gamson (2000:348)

In any case, from a practical perspective, as Homfray (2008) argues, without identities such as 'gay men' how can one research the experiences of gay men if the term is dismissed? To take Butler's standpoint on identity – an outright rejection of identity categories would be a difficult position to employ empirically.

Recognising the merits of both the essentialist and the social constructionist perspectives, I suggest an approach to identity that recognises a degree of balance between the two. My approach is to recognise sexual identities as Weeks would argue as ‘necessary fictions’ but at the same time explore how gay identities are constructed. A limitation of the essentialist approach is the assumption that a gay identity is constant and fixed throughout life. Although there might be some continuity with the past that needs to be considered, I would argue that identity is a process. Identities are the combination of how we build our personal identities and how others construct our identities. Given that identities are something that have to be achieved throughout the life of an individual the social constructionist perspective lends itself better for my research. My focus is on the intersection of our internal identities (how we see and construct our identities) and our external identities (how others construct our identities) and the process of identity negotiation. Jenkins (2008) argues that the relationship between an individual’s identity and collective shared identities has been relatively unexplored. My aim is to try to fill this gap in an under researched area.

3.2. Sameness and difference

According to Jenkins (2008), identity is about understanding who we are and who other people are. At its very core are the concepts of difference and similarity. The two concepts work interdependently. Identity is not just about what we have in common with others but also what sets us apart. The concepts of sameness and difference do not make sense on their own. Given that they are two sides of the same coin, identification requires both. Feminist writers (Bacchi 1990; Webb 1997; Liff and Wajcman 1996) have discussed these two concepts in relation to the debate around whether women are different from men. Liff and Wajcman (1996:80) in a similar vein to Jenkins argue that the terms, sameness and difference create a false dichotomy given their interdependence. Although Jenkins highlights the relational aspect of sameness and difference, the feminist perspective questions whether the terms are equally balanced. Jenkins (2008:17), for example, argues that identities and the meanings attached to them are a matter of agreement, disagreement, communication and negotiation. Jenkins seems to underplay

structural issues of power in which the terms sameness and difference are already defined. Feminists start with questioning how the terms are constructed in the first place and from what point of reference. Bacchi (1990:x), for example, argues that the meaning of difference is ‘distance from a point of reference’. The point of reference according to Bacchi in relation to gender is always ‘man’. Similarly, Liff and Wajcman (1996:87) argue that difference is constructed only in relation to the category of the other. In this case the other is women, being different from men. I would suggest that the debate surrounding the issue of sameness and difference in feminist literature has salience for gay men, whether they perceive or are perceived by others as different from a point of reference, namely heterosexuality. In fact, Chambers (2007) amongst others applies the debate around sameness and difference to sexuality. Chambers argues that where society takes the view that heterosexuality is the norm in terms of identity, practice and behaviour, heterosexuality is the benchmark or as Chambers puts it the *median point of the curve* (2007:663). Other sexual identities are evaluated against how far they deviate from the median of what is deemed as ‘normal’. As Young (1990:170) points out, where differences are created they always imply a good/bad binary, where one is deemed inferior in relation to a superior standard. My work picks up on this theme and investigates whether gay men perceive that others such as work colleagues see them as different, using heteronormativity as a benchmark.

A number of writers (Webb 1997; Baachi 1990; Liff and Wajcman 1996; Young 1990) have taken issue with the liberal approach to equality, where the goal is to treat people the same irrespective of their differences. As feminists have pointed out this approach requires women to deny or minimise their differences with men in order to achieve equality. In many respects, the liberal approach of assimilation requires women to model themselves on men and their attributes. The liberal assimilationist approach was adopted by other diversity strands in the 1970s including, as Young (1990) notes, early gay rights groups. The aim of early gay rights movements was to de-stigmatise homosexuality and to persuade the wider public that gay men were no different from anyone else. This approach, however, has its limitations. As Young (1990:157) points out, assimilation requires gay men to keep quiet or downplay their sexuality as a private matter. My work

aims to explore whether gay men seek to minimise their differences with co-workers through downplaying their sexuality, suppressing any expression of their sexuality in the workplace in order to 'fit in' with the mainstream. Young adds that the assimilation approach produces self-loathing amongst those who are different. These ideas I aim to explore in my research to see whether gay men aspire towards a heterosexual male template in how they present themselves in order to be accepted by others.

Previous research (Woods and Lucas 1993; Creed and Scully 2000; Clair et al 2003) on sexual minorities has revealed that one strategy used in presenting themselves to others in the workplace is to attempt to normalise their gay identity. This is done by presenting information about an unfamiliar lifestyle and sexuality in familiar heterosexual terms. This approach aims to make their difference seem ordinary or commonplace. As Woods and Lucas (1993:181) argue, normalising requires making a gay identity seem mundane and familiar by assimilating to the norm, by downplaying difference and by emphasising commonalities with heterosexual lives. A typical strategy noted by Creed and Scully, and Woods and Lucas, is to discuss domestic events so as to demonstrate normalcy to co-workers. Creed and Scully cited an example of this approach taken by one of their lesbian respondents.

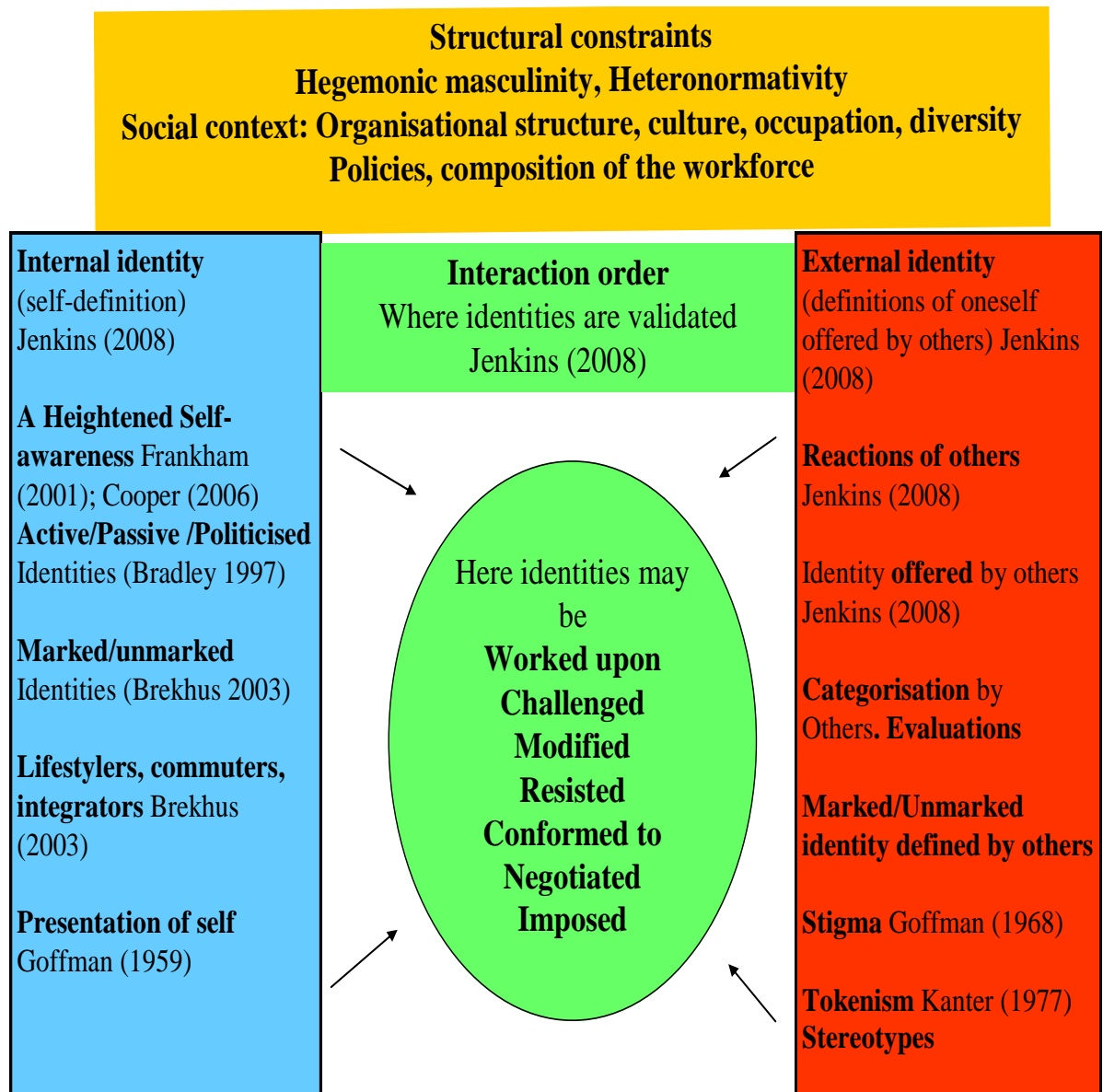
'Lots of other people have had troubles with their teenage sons. We've got a problem. Think of something mundane. We mow the grass. We call Rot-Rooter for plumbing.' Creed and Scully (2000:23)

Goffman (1968) refers to such normalising behaviours as 'covering'. This is where those with a discreditable identity such as homosexuality attempt to play down or self-edit their gay identity in interaction with others in order to assimilate. Goffman argues that although an individual might reveal a 'discreditable identity' they might avoid the more discreditable elements of the identity. Goffman's ideas on stigma management raise useful questions for my research. These include exploring the strategies that gay men use in managing their gay identity in different social settings.

Table 2: Key perspectives on identity construction in relation to my research

Perspective	Useful elements of perspective	Limitations of perspective
Goffman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of self, back stage and front stage. • Careful attention to local setting where social interaction occurs • It focuses on the individual and his view of the world and day-to-day interactions • Stigma management • Identity is a continuous process – the performance can change depending on social context. The issue of reflection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignores larger wider external factors that impinge on how identities are constructed • A disengagement of individuals from the social structures of everyday life • Neglects issue of power – ignores structural power imbalances.
Jenkins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal/external dialectic of identity – identities are relational • The impact of others in identity construction in terms of their reactions and treatment of our identities • The meanings attached to identities are socially created. Meaning emerges through interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical limitation of separating the internal and external dimensions of identity for analysis as they are intertwined
Brekhus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominant identity – lifestylers, commuters. Explores the concept of marked identities and the extent to which individuals ‘choose’ to make their gay identity a dominant one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignores the impact of social context and the constraints this places on individuals • Little focus on work context • A one dimensional view of identity.
Bradley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active and Passive identities • Political identities • Individuals have agency in identity construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes that identities primarily become active when faced with a negative reaction from others. Rather than the possibility that they may be triggered by positive events.

Figure 3: Conceptual framework



3.3. Symbolic interactionism

Table 2 above draws upon the key theories that I wish to use to explore how gay men manage their identities in the workplace. All of the above theorists (Jenkins 2008; Bradley 1996; Goffman 1959, 1968; Brekhus 2003) share similar perspectives, taking a symbolic interactionist approach. They all analyse identity from a micro perspective

focusing on individuals and how they construct their identities in relation to others. Probably symbolic interactionism's greatest strength is its close scrutiny to the local contexts in which social interaction takes place and to how social context shapes the meanings people assign to those experiences. In addition, symbolic interactionism's advantage is that it allows a way in to focus on the individual as part of a larger system and how one sees the world. It stresses the individual's point of view and how the individual perceives other's reactions to his gay identity. Gay theorists such as Plummer (1996) in fact have used symbolic interactionism as a means of understanding how forms of homosexuality have arisen over time. My work picks up on the symbolic interactionist perspective to explore how gay men manage their gay identity against a backdrop of different organisational environments throughout their working lives. In addition, these theorists all argue that identity is *a process* in which individuals actively construct and reconstruct themselves as an ongoing project. All of the above perspectives argue that individuals have a degree of agency in the construction of their identities. As Bradley points out, it would be incorrect to assume that we sit passively waiting to be shaped by the processes that surround us. We do have some degree of control in determining our social identities. Equally, all of the above theorists argue that the intersection of our self-identities and our external identities is where identities are contested. The internal and external aspects of identity cohabit and are interwoven in an ongoing process of identification. It is therefore very difficult to make an absolute distinction between the two. Although the two are inextricably linked it does not mean that the internal and the external act in harmony. How we see ourselves and how others see us may be at odds. Consequently, as Jenkins (2008:45) points out, identification is something over which struggles take place, where identities are contested and fought over. There is in this sense a form of negotiation between the internal and external dimensions of identity. As Jenkins (2008) states:

'It isn't enough to send a message about identity: that message must be accepted by significant others before an identity can be said to be 'taken on'. As a consequence, identifications are to be found and negotiated at their boundaries, in the encounter between internal and external.' Jenkins (2008:44)

A common theme from all these theorists is that identities are always relational, in the sense that they only exist in relation to other potential identities. Jenkins (1996) argues that the relationship between an individual unique identity and collective shared identities has been relatively unexplored. I would suggest that this is particularly the case in relation to gay identities in the workplace.

3.4. The Interaction Order

At the heart of the model in Figure 3 is the concept of the '*interaction order*', initially developed by Goffman (1959) in the '*presentation of self*' and later built upon by Jenkins (1996, 2004, 2008). The *interaction order*, as discussed more fully below, is where our self identities (internal) meet with the external moment or as Jenkins coins it, as the dilemma surrounding the *internal – external dialectic*. Jenkins, following Goffman's work is primarily concerned with performances that are influenced by persons in the direct presence of the performer. It is the interaction order – the meeting between the internal and external dialectic that is the key focus of my investigation.

Jenkins (2008) develops Goffman's theory of 'Presentation of self' to explain how we manage our identities through his model the internal – external dialectic of identity. It is dialectic due to the fact that the two aspects of identity are contesting and negotiating over the different meanings placed on identities. In this model, Jenkins aims to explain the play-off between the two. In the play-off, the response of others might lead to reflection on the part of the individual. This is where the individual might adapt or edit his identity due to either positive or negative reactions from others. What is central to both Goffman's and Jenkins' later work is how individuals negotiate their identities within what Jenkins calls the *interaction order*. The *interaction order* is where the internal moment of the dialectic of identification (defined as the image individuals present of themselves for acceptance by others) meets with the external moment (defined as the reception and response of others of that presentation). The dilemma faced with the *interaction order*, identified by Jenkins, is that we cannot fully manage or control the outcomes of the presentation we project to others. Even though people have some control

over the signals about themselves that they send to others, we are all at a disadvantage in that we cannot ensure either their ‘correct’ reception or interpretation, or know with certainty how they are received or interpreted. (Jenkins 2008:42). As Jenkins states, what people think about us is no less significant than what we think about ourselves. Consequently, it is not enough to assert an identity; that assertion must also be validated, or not, by those with whom we have dealings. As Jenkins argues, identity is never unilateral. Hence the interaction order is the realm in which boundaries may be pushed between the individual’s interpretation of self-identity and that ascribed by others. Both Goffman and Jenkins take a symbolic interactionist perspective, in the sense that they are more interested in making sense of an individual’s actions, of tracking how the actors themselves create their identities through interaction with others.

Jenkins (2008:43) argues that identities have consequences. These consequences might be in relation to the distribution of resources such as pay discrimination as discussed earlier in section 2.2. Within the interaction order those who have power might seek to marginalise, or silence the voices of marginalised groups. Power and authority are critical in determining whose definition counts within this struggle in the interaction order. Consequently, as Jenkins (2008) argues, individual identities need to be worked on. I find that Jenkins’ concept of the internal-external dialectic is a useful model to understand how gay men construct their identities in the workplace. I suggest, in line with Jenkins’ model, that social identities are actively constructed throughout an individual’s working life. I therefore wish to investigate how gay men have managed their gay identity throughout their working lives; to explore whether gay men have modified or challenged their behaviour from one job or occupational position to another, and/or over the life course.

3.5. The Internal Identity

Identities cannot be easily separated into two separate components - internal and external identities, due to the fact that they are firstly, interwoven closely together and secondly,

they work in tandem. Nevertheless, in order to explain the model above, I will first outline the internal dimension to identity.

Bradley (1996) defines personal or (internal) identity as:

'The construction of the self: our sense of ourselves as unique individuals, how we perceive ourselves and how we think others see us.' (Bradley:1996:24).

The internal identity is according to Jenkins (2008) how we see ourselves and our self-definition of who we are. Previous studies (Frankham, 2001) have highlighted how gay men have a raised self-consciousness about their sexual identity in how they see themselves. This is because identifying as gay is socially stigmatised. Equally, Bell, Weinberg and Hammersmith (1981) reported that homosexual males were almost twice as likely as their heterosexual counterparts to report feeling 'very much' or 'somewhat' different from other boys. Moreover, Brekhus (2003) argues that gay men are more likely to be self-consciously aware of the way they manage their identity. Similarly, Phellas (1998) argues that a gay identity is likely to take priority over other identities as those individuals who reveal an openly gay identity become identified primarily in terms of their sexual identity.

Another concept that may sit equally well within the internal dimension and the external dimension of identity is that of marked/unmarked identities. Marked identities according to Brekhus (2003) are attributes that are socially salient and perceived as highly relevant, whilst unmarked identities are perceived as generic and are typically ignored as irrelevant to who one is. A marked identity is one which is accented and socially highlighted and quite often stigmatised whereas an unmarked one is taken for granted. Examples of unmarked identities might include 'heterosexual', 'male', 'middle class' or 'white'. Marked identities, on the other hand, according to Brekhus, might include 'black', 'woman', 'immigrant' or 'gay'. Those identities that are socially marked receive far more attention by others as coherent social categories than unmarked identities. Brekhus argues in relation to the contemporary United States that 'gay' is a salient identity attribute. Brekhus, in coming from the same perspective as Jenkins, argues that identities can be

self-managed. In relation to sexuality, from his study of 30 gay men living in the suburbs of New York, Brekhus noted that gay men have a degree of agency in how they manage their 'marked' gay identity. Although ideal types, Brekhus identified three typologies around which individuals organise their marked identity, which are: lifestylers, commuters and integrators. These three typologies are defined by the proportion of time the men have an openly gay identity, and how dense or concentrated it is at different times. For a gay lifestyler sexuality is the key defining feature of who he is. Here, what he wears, consumes, eats, whom he meets is informed by his sexuality. In addition, a gay lifestyler will live in openly gay ghettos and organise his life around his marked status. In the internal dimension of identity, the marked identity defined by others is inverted. Its negative value ascribed by others is inverted by gay lifestylers into a positive value that entails pride and even a political dimension. A commuter, on the other hand, lives part of his time in heterosexual spaces and travels to identity specific spaces to be his 'gay self'. A commuter, therefore, switches on and off his marked status like a chameleon depending on his social circumstances. Finally, gay integrators live openly in heterosexual spaces and integrate their gay identity into living in a heterosexualised world. The integrator does not want to make an issue of being gay. Integrators in their self-management of their identities downplay their marked identity (sexuality) and emphasise other facets of their identity such as their occupation, their social class, their conventional masculinity or their hobbies and interests. Unlike gay lifestylers, their sexuality takes on a complementary status rather than a master status. One of the weaknesses of Brekhus' analogy is that his three typologies seem rather one dimensional. A significant proportion of his analysis focuses on fairly simplistic behaviours of gay men. Brekhus seems to imply that gay men in their self-management of their marked identity can pick and choose whether they wish to be a 'lifestyler', 'commuter' or 'integrator'. Even though Brekhus recognises the structural constraints that gay men face in the management of their marked identity he does not explain the imposed identity choices gay men might have to take. He seems to underplay the issue of power and control that others might have in constructing our identities. He does not explain, for example, the reason why some gay men may adopt a 'lifestyler' identity and others an 'integrator'. Interestingly, Brekhus argues that those gay men who have high status

occupations or high incomes have more freedom in their management of their marked identity (2003:132). But is this always the case? It might be to the contrary that the higher the status of the occupation the more difficult it might become to openly disclose one's sexuality as the risks involved might be greater. He, therefore, seems to ignore issues of organisational context that may significantly constrain the degree of agency individuals may have in shaping their identities. Nevertheless, Brekhus' work does raise some useful questions, for example, by questioning how individuals organise and balance competing ingredients of the self. In my research, I wish to investigate how gay men manage their marked identity in the workplace. In addition, one of the issues I wish to explore is the impact that occupation has in the degree to which gay men have agency in the management of their social identities. A further aim is to explore whether individuals perceive their occupational identity as more significant than their gay identity in the workplace.

3.6 Passive/active identities

Bradley's concepts (1996) of passive, active and politicized identities take a slightly different nuance on the issue of marked/unmarked identities. Unlike Brekhus, Bradley argues that identities become active due to external triggers rather than an individual's own choosing as is the case with 'lifestylers'. For Bradley, 'passive' identities are those parts of our identities that are not acted on nor part of our identity that we are consciously aware of on a regular basis. For example, for most people, we are not perpetually thinking of our sexuality (though for sexual minorities as mentioned above (Frankham 2001; Bell, Weinberg and Hammersmith 1981; Phellas 1998) it is more likely to play on their minds given the potential stigma attached to it). According to Bradley, a 'passive' identity will only become an active one when it is triggered by certain circumstances. These circumstances tend to be negative ones, for example, when an individual is defined in a derogatory way. Thus according to Bradley (1996:25) active identities come alive when faced with experiences of discrimination. Incidents where Bradley's ideas may apply to gay identities could be where a gay man might be defined by others as a 'sissy' or a 'poof' or possibly marginalised or ignored by others in the workplace. It might be the

case, however, that a passive identity may become active without an external trigger. The stimulus that makes a passive identity active might come from within (in the internal dimension of identity). An example of this is where a number of gay men feel a need to 'come out' to their work colleagues. It may be for some a pivotal moment in their lives. As Ward (2008) noted the majority of interviewees described 'coming out' as the 'high point' of their careers. 'Coming out' gives many gay men a feeling of liberation 'to be themselves' in front of others. Equally the stimulus may come from others through their reactions and responses to one's sexuality (the external dimension of identity). I wish to explore Bradley concepts to investigate how important sexuality is to gay men as part of their social identity within the workplace.

Bradley (1996) also puts forward a third form of identity, a politicized identity. This is where an individual uses their identity as a more constant base for action and where individuals constantly think of themselves in terms of a particular identity. Equally, Phellas (1996) argues that due to the dominance of heteronormative assumptions in Western societies 'coming out' openly to others is an inherently political statement. Examples of where gay men might actively take on a political identity could be where gay men join gay movements or gay networks to champion their cause. Interestingly Bradley questions the importance of identities particularly in a collective sense. The rise of individualism and a consumer culture has weakened any collective and communal ties that might have existed. Hence Bradley (1997:207) coins the phrase 'fractured identities'. To a certain degree it could be argued that a gay collective identity is fragmenting, if it ever did exist in the first place. With many gay rights and struggles won in recent years as enshrined in legislation such as the repealing of clause 28 of the Local Government Act (1988), the Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations (2003) and the Civil Partnership Act (2004), it may be the case that many gay men may not feel the necessity to identify themselves in a collective manner. Having won these battles, many gay men may feel that they can assimilate themselves into mainstream society without depending on a retreat to a 'gay community'. Again a question that arises from this form of identity is to explore how central their sexuality is to their working lives. To some gay men, is their gay identity the most important facet to their identity? Is a gay identity something

that some gay men actively ensure is an active identity in their presentation of self? What makes some gay men feel that their gay identity is such an important aspect of their identity that they feel a need to politicise it?

3.7. Goffman's Presentation of self

Goffman's theory of the 'Presentation of self' (1959) – an earlier theory of identity management later built upon by Jenkins, fits within the model above more closely to the internal dimension of identity where Goffman uses metaphors from the stage. Goffman describes as the backstage aspect to identity where the individual can be his true self (Jenkins 2008, later develops this into the internal dialectic of identity). For Goffman, the internal dimension of identity is where the individual has agency in deciding how he wishes to present himself to others. Whereas the front stage might be where some gay men may feel that their gay identity may need either to be disguised completely or edited for public consumption. Goffman explores how the presentation of self changes dependent on situation. Goffman's work illustrates that lived identities are changeable, and that such modifications are normal and an everyday occurrence. According to Goffman (1959), individuals attempt to present themselves in the way that they wish to be perceived by others. Hence individuals have the capacity to influence how their social identity is perceived by others. Again this is similar to Jenkins' concept of the interaction order, where individuals need to work on their identities through, conforming, negotiating, challenging or editing their identity in their presentation of themselves to others. My work aims to use Goffman's presentation of self to explore the reflective processes and the adaptations that gay men make in presenting their gay identity to others. The concept of presentation of self raises a series of questions for my work, these include; the impact of occupation on identity management particularly those in positions of authority. For example whether a gay identity conflicts with the expected role a teacher has to perform in the classroom. Like Brekhus (2003), it is in the internal dimension of identity where we can decide how we are to present our 'marked' or as Goffman describes it, our 'discreditable' identity to others. Goffman, by using theatrical metaphors, argues that the identities we present are very much an act or a drama. As

Ward (2008) has noted, this might be the case for many gay men, who may feel they have to 'act straight' in their presentations of themselves. Identity management is particularly pertinent for gay men given the potential 'invisibility' of sexuality. Unlike other identities gay men can choose to some degree whether to either conceal or reveal their minority sexual identity against a background of presumed heterosexuality. A further issue unique to invisible identities and, in particular sexuality, is the assumption that the process of 'coming out' is a single dichotomous event or state. That is, a person 'comes out' in a particular time, place and is either 'out' or not 'out'. As Jenkins (2008) and Goffman (1959) argue, managing a discredited or potentially discreditable identity is a process not a single event. Applying this to gay men, individual gay men might be 'out' to a selective few at work or 'drip feed' information to others before revealing themselves. Given the constant presumption of heterosexuality, the process of 'coming out' is often a repetitive action (Ward 2008). In every new situation and faced with new contacts the 'coming out' process has to be repeated. Consequently, gay men have to constantly manage their social identity. A compounded problem with discreditable identities is that the individual can never be sure what the reactions of others might be. As Jenkins argues in an extension of Goffman's work, although individuals may present themselves in a manner that is more palatable to the public, it is the reception and reaction of others of that presentation that shapes the external aspect of one's identity. However good the presentation of self might be, unless it is accepted by others it will not give us the full picture of identity. Furthermore, in the presentation of self to others, if the 'actor' misrepresents himself or the 'mask slips on the front stage', then as Goffman argues, they chance 'immediate humiliation and sometimes permanent loss of reputation.' (1959:59). Consequently, an individual may think that he is passing off a credible performance in front of others. However, at any time, it may be challenged or questioned by others. This might lead to reflection on behalf of the individual, leading to an editing or a modification of his presentation of himself. I, therefore, aim to explore in the interaction order or front stage as Goffman coins it, personal experiences and incidences when the mask has slipped and how individuals have managed such awkward situations.

Due to the micro focus of Goffman's work, his analysis of the presentation of self underplays the significance of the external factors that shape our identities. Goffman's theory of the presentation of self seems to imply that it is very much dependent on the individual in how he manages his identity. A weakness in Goffman's argument is that he ignores or underplays the significance of external pressures and structural forces that shape how we manage our identities. In fact, Goffman (1959:15) freely admits that he is primarily concerned with understanding performances that are influenced by individuals in the direct presence of the performer. Consequently, he seems to ignore the influence of social controls and power that impact on our identity management. As Hoxsey (2008) points out, one of the key weaknesses of Goffman's work is its principal focus on a micro level of analysis, that is, individuals in their immediate settings at the expense of more macro analysis of the larger structural forces that influence the shape of the world people inhabit. Although it is vitally important to understand how individuals interact directly with other people, we cannot ignore the social forces that lie behind their interactions. Nevertheless, the strength of Goffman's theoretical framework lies in its ease of application, namely through interviewing gay men to obtain their stories of how they present themselves to others in day-to-day interactions with others in the workplace. It is also a useful framework to understand how people negotiate their identities within face-to-face interactions. Even so, an awareness of social structures is necessary, as Goffman tends to disengage actors and their interactions from the social structures of everyday life.

3.8 The External Identity

In response to the limitations of 'presentation of self', Goffman later recognises the impact of external forces, where he notes that identity can be 'spoiled'. Jenkins (2008) adds to this by stating:

'Identification, particularly within institutions, can be heavily biased in favour of its external moment; and that identification is often a matter of imposition and resistance, claim and counter-claim, rather than a consensual process of mutuality and negotiation.' Jenkins (2008:95)

Thus Goffman although recognising that individuals have some control in their presentation of their selves, realises that it is very much shaped and influenced by structural, external factors. The significance of Goffman's work to my research is to explore to what degree do gay men put on a mask in their presentations of themselves? To what degree are these presentations accepted by colleagues in the workplace? How do gay men respond to the reactions of others in the workplace to their sexuality and vice versa?

Goffman's theory of the 'presentation of self' is very much linked to his study of stigmas. In his book, *Stigma* (1968) he is concerned with how individuals manage discrepancies between their 'virtual social identity' – their appearance to others in interaction and their 'actual social identity'. Goffman argues that individuals with a discreditable actual identity want to be 'virtually normal'. The stigma according to Goffman is the gap between the virtual and the actual and the shame that attaches to its discovery by others. Goffman's stigma highlights the issue of how stigmatization is a form of social control regulating expected gender roles. Stigma plays a key role in producing and reproducing relations of power and control. It causes some groups to be devalued and others to feel that they are superior in some ways. Stigma plays a significant role in identity management by ensuring that one cedes to external pressures to conform. Homosexuality may no longer be perceived as a stigma or an abnormality in the same category as say someone who has to wear a colostomy bag (an example used by Goffman), but it is still the case that a gay identity goes against expected gender norms and social expectations of what is deemed to be normal. As Cusack et al (2003) point out, Goffman's stigma highlights the issue of how stigmatisation is a form of social control.

'Stigmatization is a mode of social control which works at symbolic and moral levels, regulating alternative identities and behaviours through the continuous reproduction of social values and mores.' Cusack et al (2003:297)

I wish to investigate how gay men manage this 'discreditable' attribute. Goffman's concept of stigma raises a series of questions for my work. Do gay men feel they have to edit information about themselves to be more palatable to others? Do they feel they have

to conform in the way they present their bodies in how they perform masculinity? Do gay men feel different from their heterosexual colleagues because of their sexuality?

3.9 Stereotyping, marked identities and tokenism

I noted above how in relation to internal identities, Brekhus (2003) argues that gay men can 'choose' to make their gay identity a marked identity. This is where a gay man decides to invert a potentially stigmatised identity, his sexuality, into a badge of pride that he deliberately shows off like a peacock. This section explores how others make a gay identity a marked one. Marked identities are those that are socially marked receiving far more attention by others as coherent social categories than unmarked identities. In a similar vein, Woods and Lucas (1993) refer to marked identities using Goffman's metaphor as 'abnormals'. 'Abnormal' identities receive a heightened level of attention and scrutiny.

'They [abnormals] become the gay engineer, the foreign boss the black accountant, the top-ranked salesman. Their difference, whether valued or devalued, sets them apart.' Woods and Lucas. (1993: 181) [Their emphasis].

There are also parallels to marked identities, in Kanter's research (1977), on tokenism. Kanter's work focused on exploring the impact of women taking on a token status where they were in a minority of one or close to one where they were working with a peer group of men. According to Kanter, those who are a numerically minority group capture a disproportionate awareness share compared to numerical dominants. Tokens refer to those who are defined by their master status or difference and their ascribed characteristics in contrast to the dominants. Woods and Lucas (1993) define tokenism as:

'Whenever the few must interact with the many, they often find that their behaviour is interpreted symbolically. They become tokens and are treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals.' Woods and Lucas (1993:213)

According to Kanter, there are a number of conceptual phenomena that characterise the relationship between tokens and dominants. First, tokens have a higher visibility in the

eyes of others because of their minority status. Second there is the perceptual tendency to exaggerate or polarise differences between the tokens and the dominants. The numerically dominant becomes more aware of their commonalities and their differences from the token.

Tokenism is very much a relational concept built upon heightening differences and creating boundaries between the numerically dominant and the minority. In a similar vein, Jenkins (2008:152) notes how stereotypes are based upon exaggerated differences. They are a means of understanding, in a simplified way, others. Jenkins argues that stereotyping is an important aspect of identification and classification. He sees stereotyping as a means of making sense of *excessive information flows*. One of the weaknesses in Jenkins's discussion of stereotyping is that he seems to play down the impact of power in how some groups have more power in creating classifications and establishing stereotypes and maintaining boundaries.

Stereotyping was a recurrent theme in previous literature on the experiences of gay men in the workplace (Ward 2008; Shallenberger 1994; Woods and Lucas 1993 and Rumens 2008b). Ward (2008) reported how some gay men were stereotyped in the presumption that they had lascivious and sexually charged appetites. He also noted in similar findings to Shallenberger, (1994), in the U.S. that some respondents were perceived as spokespeople or role models for their group. Others would come to them seeking advice on gay issues.

In my research, I aim to explore whether my respondents perceive that others such as work colleagues view them as different marking them apart, possibly exaggerating differences through stereotyping. I also aim to explore the term coined by Kanter of *boundary heightening*. Do others in the workplace mark their commonality with other heterosexuals or express difference from gay men? Furthermore, I aim to explore whether those that my respondents interact with in the workplace saw their gay identity as a marked one that defined them above all else. In addition, one of the challenges I have set myself is to investigate whether others in the workplace perceive gay men as a piece of

curiosity, as something exotic or strange. Curiosity, I would argue, in line with Kanter's concept of tokenism, is probably raised because gay men who reveal their sexual identity stand out in organisations where they are a minority against a numerically dominant heterosexual majority. Woods and Lucas (1993) picked up on this theme where they noted how others attached a novelty tag to openly gay co-workers. Co-workers were unaccustomed to working with gay men before heightening an awareness of difference. As Woods and Lucas pointed out:

'To co-workers, a gay employee is often a novelty. The men and women in his office may be unaccustomed to having a gay person around.' Woods and Lucas (1993:62)

Given the changes in attitudes towards homosexuality and recent legislation in the U.K. that have presented gay men with greater opportunities to be more open about their sexuality in the workplace, it would be interesting to explore whether after nearly 20 years since Woods and Lucas's work if gay men are still perceived as a novelty or a piece of curiosity.

3.10. Structural constraints

One of the weaknesses of Jenkins' model (2008) of the internal/external dialectic of identity is that it focuses on the micro-dynamics of how identities are socially constructed underplaying the significance of more macro elements in wider society. Jenkins largely ignores the larger structural forces that influence the shape of the world people inhabit, although he does refer to the structural dimensions in what he coins the *institutional order*. Such macro elements include hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity. As Hoxsey (2008:6) argues, if one does not consider the larger picture that impinges upon an actor's performance then an understanding of *'one's self-presentation would be moot, as actors act within a social context and not simply for themselves.'* Although my findings will focus at a micro level, that is the lived experiences of gay men in how they manage their social identities in the workplace, this does not imply that structural constraints will be neglected.

3.11. Hegemonic masculinity

Although social identities are, according to Jenkins (2008), validated in the interaction order, it may be the case that structural constraints come into play that limit the degree to which gay men can manage their social identities. An individual might self-define as gay but conceal that identity in certain settings for reasons such as discomfort, fear or social pressure. One such mechanism that might curtail individual freedom in shaping one's social identity is hegemonic masculinity both in one's self-definition in the internal dimension and how others define and categorise an individual's identity in the external dimension. The concept of hegemony originates from the work of Gramsci (1971), who defined it as a type of domination whereby a dominant (economic) class controls society, imposing its definition of the situation. The dominant class not only legitimates its position, but also secures the acceptance and sometimes the complicity of the subordinated. The ruling class achieves its objective by making its position seem natural and correct. Hegemony according to Donaldson is:

'...about winning and holding of power and the formation (and destruction) of social groups in that process. It is about the ways in which the ruling class establishes and maintains its domination. The ability to impose a definition of the situation to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality is an essential part of the process. Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear 'natural', ordinary', 'normal'.' Donaldson (1993:645)

Kessler et al (1982) were the first to apply the concept of hegemony to masculinity, which was later developed in a host of studies (Connell 1982, Hearn 2004). In relation to sexuality, hegemony or hegemonic (heterosexual) masculinity creates an idealised form of masculinity that men should aspire to. At the same time, other forms of masculinity are subordinated or marginalised. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) define hegemonic masculinity as the embodiment of *the currently most honoured way of being a man*. Hegemonic masculinity, I would argue, bears similarities to Goffman's (1963) work, referring to American society in 1960s, where he noted that heterosexual males set the standards that others were compared against or were found wanting. As Goffman wrote:

'A young married, white, urban, northern heterosexual, protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height, and a recent record in sports. Every American male tends to look out upon the world from this perspective...Any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways is likely to view himself as unworthy, incomplete and inferior. (Goffman, 1963:128)

Goffman's work on stigmas although taking a slightly different approach, was exploring the aspired benchmark that others should strive towards.

Amongst theorists there is no common consensus in how hegemonic masculinity is defined. Connell (1987:183), for example, defines the dominant or hegemonic form of masculinity as being characterised by heterosexuality, power, authority and technical competence. Connell (1995:67) later defines the term in how one behaves. Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity is a relational term, defined in what it is not. *An unmasculine person would behave differently; being peaceable, rather than violent, conciliatory rather than dominating, hardly able to kick a football, uninterested in sexual conquest and so forth.* Bradley (2007:47), on the other hand, defines the term without reference to its opposite, as *'macho', tough, competitive, self-reliant, controlling, aggressive and fiercely heterosexual.* It is probably hardly surprising that theorists have had difficulty pinpointing exactly what the concept is especially as hegemonic masculinity is an idealised form that very few men actually meet. In fact, Connell (1995) argues that the number of men who actually put into practice hegemonic forms of masculinity is probably rather small. Hegemonic masculinity is thus something that men are expected to aspire to as illustrated in the mass media through cowboy films and their like. As Connell states:

'Normative definitions ...offer a standard: masculinity is what men ought to be. This definition is often found in media studies, in discussions of exemplars such as John Wayne or of genres such as the thriller....Few men actually match the 'blueprint' or display the toughness and independence acted by Wayne, Bogart or Eastwood.' Connell (1995:70)

Donaldson (1993:646) in agreement with Connell, argues that hegemonic masculinity is a cultural ideal, even a fantasy figure that in reality hardly corresponds to the actual personalities of the majority of men. Telford (1996) tries to get round the problem

surrounding defining masculinity by arguing, that it is not necessary to clearly define masculinities other than hegemonic masculinity. Similarly, Connell (1995:70) argues that normative (hegemonic) masculinity is defined as what men ought to be. It is thus not necessary to define the term masculinity. Other forms of masculinity including gay ones can at best be described as those that are not hegemonic. Indeed, Clatterbaugh (2004) criticises the literature on masculinities for the very reason that the term is so ill-defined making it difficult to pin down and assess. Similarly, Wetherell and Edley (1999) criticise the issue of conformity to hegemonic masculinity as it fails to explain what it actually looks like in practice. Like Clatterbaugh (2004), Whitehead (1998) criticises the ambiguity over defining the term. Responding to Connell's analogies with male role models from Hollywood, Whitehead highlights the confusion over the concept, questioning who is a hegemonically masculine man.

'Is it John Wayne or Leonardo DiCaprio; Mike Tyson or Pele? Or maybe, at different times, all of them?' Whitehead (1998:58)

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:838) in a later reappraisal of Connell's work, recognise that hegemonic masculinities do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual men. Nevertheless, Connell argues that they do express widespread ideals, desires, and fantasies. Key academic theorists (Connell 1995; Kimmel 2004 and Bradley 2007) have attempted to overcome the issue of defining hegemonic masculinity by stressing its relational aspect. A key element of hegemonic masculinity is that it is inherently relational. 'Masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'. A consequence of this, as Bradley (2007:65) points out, is that the relational aspect creates a false binary, where people are pressurised into falling into one of two camps. Individuals have to show either masculine or feminine attributes, even though for many individuals they may lie somewhere in between these two points. Hegemonic masculinity creates false polarised types.

Telford (1996) believes the pursuit to achieve hegemony may involve preventing the cultural definition and recognition of alternatives. Consequently, subordination of some masculinities are deemed inevitable within a hegemonic system. Subordination occurs as

a dominant masculinity assumes an ideological character. Although Jenkins (2008), Bradley (2007) and Goffman (1968) all recognise the degree of agency that individuals have in managing their social identities, they equally recognise that there are external constraints. As Jenkins argues:

'Identification, particularly within institutions, can be heavily biased in favour of its external moment.' Jenkins (2008:95)

Similarly, Bradley (2007:25) in her theoretical contribution on gender recognises that the degree to which individuals are at liberty to challenge external constraints is very variable. Nevertheless, Connell (1995:76) argues, in line with Gramsci's earlier ideas, that hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type. The meanings attached to the hegemonic position are always contestable. Because hegemonic masculinity is socially constructed and imposed it can equally be socially resisted and challenged. As Frank (1987:161) argues, there exists the possibility of change. My work picks up on the concept of hegemonic masculinity to explore whether gay men perceive that the attitudes of others have changed in how they see gay men perform masculinity. Similarly, I aim to explore whether incidents where gay men might challenge and contest hegemonic masculinity.

In a similar vein, Bradley (2007:23) recognises the degree of agency individuals have in shaping their identities. We do not passively wait to be moulded and shaped by the processes that surround us.

'Our identities as gendered and sexual beings are not simply imposed on us, but are something which we are constantly engaged in creating and recreating.'
Bradley (2007:21)

Consequently, it is clear from existing research (Connell, 1987) that the concept of hegemonic masculinity needs to be recognised in relation to the degree that individuals have agency in shaping their social identities in the workplace. Hegemonic masculinity and Goffman's concept of stigma attached to discredited identities such as homosexuality have a number of strands in common. Probably hegemonic masculinity's most potent

aspect is the way that it enforces and polices conformity to its idealised form of masculinity. As Halford and Leonard (2001:145) point out, hegemonic masculinity renders homosexuality as 'problematic' in such a way that gay men are forced to manage their sexuality. Hegemonic masculinity reinforces the idea that those forms of masculinity that deviate from the idealised norm lead to conformist behaviour. Hegemonic masculinity, as existing research has shown, (Ward, 2008) might cause some gay men to either play down their marked identity, as Brekhus (2003) has observed, or may lead to a heightened self-awareness of their difference, leading possibly to some gay men refashioning their identity in their presentation of themselves in order to be accepted by others. Self-presentation strategies that gay men may feel compelled to follow might include trying to 'act straight.' This was observed in Ward's (2008) study of a civil service department:

'One Civil Servant, who worked in the Micro Department, and who had previously had a customer-facing job, told me about the effects of constantly having to cover up his sexual identity: 'Depression; used to fly off the handle. Because I was on the counter, my first thought was – are they able to notice? Am I acting straight?' (Ward 2008:28)

Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, may enforce conformity in the ways that gay men manage their identities. In the interaction order, there might be considerable peer pressure to conform to hegemonic heterosexual masculinity as observed by a number of recent studies (Mac an Ghill 1994; Miller et al 2003 and Ward 2008). These studies not only demonstrate how powerful hegemonic masculinity can potentially be, but also how some gay men might feel they are compelled to manage their gay identity by 'acting straight' as a means of conforming to hegemonic masculinity.

The structural constraints of hegemonic masculinity, might not only limit the degree to which individuals can choose how they manage their gay identity in the workplace, but also create internalised pressures to conform to idealised forms of masculinity. Gay men may conform to hegemonic masculinity by showing their distaste for effeminate men (or self-hatred towards themselves) by constructing a social identity around 'acting straight'. Even amongst gay men there is social pressure to conform to hegemonic forms of

masculinity through ‘acting straight’. These pressures curtail the ways that gay men might have in managing their identities in organisations. Eliason and Schope (2007:16) also note the prejudice against effeminacy in men both in the dominant culture as well as in gay subcultures.

Probably the issue of managing identity in the workplace is at its most heightened, as Jenkins (2008:150) has noted, when someone first joins an organisation. There are concerns over whether to conform to hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity. Does one ‘test the water’ first of all, taking on a heterosexual identity? Not knowing the organisational culture, attitudes of others etc might make it a necessity to conform in order to fit in.

The maintenance of hegemonic masculinity, according to theorists (Kimmel 1994; Segal 2007; Donaldson 1993) requires distancing itself from its other, namely homosexuality. Kimmel (1994:127) argues that the term ‘masculinity’ is based upon fragile and tenuous foundations. Its stability is therefore very much dependent on its distance from homosexuality. Donaldson (1993:648) adds to this debate by arguing that homosexuality in fact subverts hegemonic masculinity. Its hegemonic form is sustained through expressions of hatred for, and fear of, gay men. My work aims to explore whether my sample of gay men perceive that others in the workplace show some distance towards them. I aim to explore whether gay men feel marginalised at work in their interactions with colleagues.

Closely entwined to the debate around hegemonic masculinity is the concept of ‘multiple masculinities’ (Carrigan et al 1985; Connell 1992, 1995, 2005). Connell argues that there is more than one masculinity. Masculinities are constructed around the intersections of race, social class and sexuality. Different forms of masculinity are constructed dependent upon work context, occupation, location, industry and organisational culture. According to Connell (2005) masculinities are relational. Some masculinities such as gay ones are subordinated, whereas as others (heterosexual, white, middle class) tend to predominate in organisations. As Rumens (2013:4) states, multiple masculinities refers to the

diversity of ways that masculinity may be expressed and formed. My work aims to explore the concept of multiple masculinities to investigate whether gay men are constructing their own gay masculinities to counter and disrupt the dominant forms.

3.12. Heteronormativity and the heterosexual matrix

Bradley (1997) uses Butler's (1990) concept of the heterosexual matrix as a means of understanding how gay men might construct their identities against social norms of expected gendered behaviour. This is an important component of my conceptual framework as it explains the dominance of external structures in shaping our identities. The heterosexual matrix is defined as:

'A set of precepts and practices through which our notions of ourselves, our bodies and our sexuality are made intelligible to us within a predominately heterosexual world' Bradley (1997:74)

The heterosexual matrix is therefore a useful tool to explore how gay men might feel they need to conform to gender norms such as 'acting straight' in the management of their identities. The heterosexual matrix reveals the subtle ways in which power is exercised in order to give the impression that gender and sexuality are fixed identities unconstructed by social norms. According to the matrix, if one identifies as a given gender, one must desire a different gender. The heterosexual matrix therefore enables certain identifications, at the same time as foreclosing and disavowing others. Chambers (2007) links the heterosexual matrix to the power of heteronormativity in its capacity to limit and define the boundaries to the extent that gay men can manage their identities.

Heteronormativity being described by Bradley (2007:124) as a form of pressure placed on both sexes to conform as active heterosexuals. This argument is supported by Segal (1990:149) who argues that due to the pervasiveness of heteronormativity, there is the assumption that being gay equates to adopting some of the characteristics of the opposite sex. Other forms of sexuality are perceived as deviant, if not immoral.

The heterosexual matrix and heteronormativity are useful concepts to understand how gay men are constrained in how they manage their identities. Society takes the view that heterosexuality is the norm in terms of identity, practices and behaviour. Heterosexuality is therefore the benchmark or as Chambers argues ‘the median point on the normal curve’ (Chambers, 2007:663)

Other sexual identities are evaluated against how far they deviate from the median or what is deemed as ‘normal’. Thus heterosexuality is the standard that other forms of identity are set against. It determines the way other forms of identity are supposed to behave. The literature suggests (Chambers 2007) that it may be the case that gay men in their self-presentations shape their identities around the median point of what is deemed normal. Structural constraints may make it difficult to move too far away from expected norms, if identity is to be validated in the workplace. The significance of the heterosexual matrix is that it creates barriers and constraints on individuals in how they manage their identities, particularly, as social norms have already predetermined how individuals should behave through their gender. Ward and Winstanley (2004) in their study of sexual minorities in organisations add to this debate by arguing that heteronormativity not only regulates sexuality around a heterosexual norm but also appraises and grades homosexual identities themselves according to a hierarchical system of sexual value. ‘Stable, long-term lesbian and gay male couples are verging on respectability.’ (Ward and Winstanley, 2004:227). Thus a gay identity may be legitimised and validated by others so long as it conforms closely or emulates its ideal heterosexual counterpart. A single, flamboyant, gay man leading a promiscuous lifestyle may be deemed by others as less socially acceptable to work colleagues. It may therefore be the case that some gay men might feel they have to manage their social identities in such a way that they edit or reveal parts of their identity that are perceived as more agreeable or socially palatable within organisations. Consequently those who perform in ways closest to prevailing social expectations around sex, gender and sexuality are perhaps less organisationally vulnerable. Being openly gay in the workplace may be fine so long as one ‘acts straight’, conforms to social norms and expectations of gender conformity. My work aims to explore these concepts to investigate the extent to which gay men feel compelled to edit

or manage their gay identities in the workplace in order to have their identities validated and accepted by others.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and discussed the key theories and concepts that frame my conceptual framework. The table below summarises the ideas that will be taken forward into my investigation of how gay men manage their gay identity in the workplace. The next chapter reflectively discusses the issues around research methods and data collection.

Table 3: Key concepts and theories to explore as lines of enquiry in my thesis.

Useful concepts to take forward into my research	Lines of enquiry	Linked to research questions
Sameness and difference Bacchi (1990), Young (1990), Liff and Wajcman (1996)	Do gay men adopt strategies of sameness and difference in their presentations of self?	What self-presentation strategies do gay men use in managing their identity in the workplace?
Marked identities Brekhus (2003) Passive/active/ political identities Bradley (1996) Internal dimension of identity Jenkins (2008)	How important is their gay identity in how they define and present themselves? What triggers a gay identity to become active? What makes some gay men take on a political identity?	How important is their sexuality in their working lives in defining who they are?
Symbolic interactionism Jenkins (2008), Goffman (1959) Internal-external dialectic, the interaction order Jenkins (2008) Presentation of self Goffman (1959)	How do gay men manage and reconstruct their gay identity throughout their working lives? How do gay men challenge, negotiate, conform and assert their identities in their interactions with others? How do gay men present their gay identities? What reflective processes do they face in light of the reactions of others?	How do gay men work upon, challenge, conform to, modify and resist the identities, labels and stereotypes ascribed by others?
External identity Jenkins (2008) Stigma management Goffman (2008)	How do others react to a gay identity? What pressures do gay men feel under in their presentation of their gay identity? Do gay men feel pressure to edit the ways they present and express their sexuality?	How do gay men perceive other colleagues react and respond to their presumed sexuality?
Tokenism Kanter (1977) Marked identities Woods and Lucas (1993) Stereotyping Jenkins (2008)	How do others in the workplace see gay men? Do others exaggerate difference or see them as a piece of curiosity?	How do gay men perceive other colleagues react and respond to their presumed sexuality?
Hegemonic masculinity Kessler et al (1982), Connell (1982), Hearn (2004) Heteronormativity (Bradley, 2007)	What pressures do gay men experience in performing masculinity? Do gay men perceive that co-workers show distance towards them? What constraints do gay men experience in their gay identity work?	How do different organisational contexts impact upon the ways gay men manage their gay identity and how problematic do disclosure issues remain?

Chapter 4

Methodology and Methods

4.1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters I explored the existing literature and research most salient to this study. This chapter will outline and justify the methodology used for this research. In particular, I will highlight the main methodological issues and challenges that I have had to face throughout the research process. A pervasive theme running throughout this chapter is the role of reflection, evaluating my impact as a researcher on the study and the various practical and theoretical matters I had to confront.

In the first sections I explain the epistemological approach and I justify my reasons for choosing qualitative research, making reference to previous studies exploring the lives of LGBT people. In the next section I discuss the issues of sample size and representativeness of the sample. I also discuss the problems surrounding defining a gay identity. Following on, I outline the strengths and weaknesses of various recruitment strategies I used including snowballing. A common theme running through the next three sections; revealing my sexuality, the issue of power relations in interviews, the influence of my role as a researcher on the study. In the final section, I discuss the interview structure and how the data were analysed.

4.2. Epistemology

This study adopts an interpretivist epistemological position. As Bryman and Bell (2011) argue, the focus of an interpretivist approach is to gain an understanding of human behaviour. Interpretivism recognises the differences between people and thus requires the social scientist to explore the subjective meanings of social action. This thesis aims to explore a wide range of experiences, work contexts and settings. In particular, a key focus is to explore how 45 different gay men perceive and shape their social identities in their interactions with others. Given the research aims and objectives and the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 3, where personal agency and social context were central to my investigation, adopting an interpretivist approach was more suited. By using an

interpretivist stance I was able to capture the nuances of gay men's lives and see the world from their lens. Thus an interpretivist position allowed a way in to capture the complexity and subtlety which is used in everyday interaction in the workplace.

In parallel with an interpretivist stance, as discussed in greater depth in the conceptual framework in Chapter 3, I used symbolic interactionism as a means of analysing the data. As Bryman and Bell (2011) argue, symbolic interactionism explores the way in which the individual constructs their identity through how they perceive others see themselves. At the heart of symbolic interactionism is a focus on the interaction of individuals with others and how individuals act upon those interactions. Saunders et al (2009:116) add to this by stating, symbolic interactionism is about '*how we interpret the actions of others with whom we interact and this interpretation leads to adjustment of our own meanings and actions.*' Indeed, the four empirical chapters in this thesis are based around Jenkins' (2008) work on social identities and the impact of the work context and others on how individuals manage their social identities. The symbolic interactionist approach is evidenced in the following chapters: Chapter 5 explores the impact of workplace climate and context on disclosure, Chapter 6 investigates self-identity and identity performance, Chapter 7 explores the impact of others on gay identity management and finally, Chapter 8 explores the responses of gay men in their interactions with others. The challenge I set myself was to explore the participants' social world and understand their world and their point of view.

4.3 Reasons for deploying qualitative research methods

A key reason for choosing qualitative methods was that this approach allowed me to explore in greater depth how gay men manage their social identities in the workplace. Since the research is exploratory, a qualitative approach is more appropriate in understanding a relatively un-researched area of identity negotiation in the workplace. In addition, given the probable diverse personal circumstances of the individuals taking part in the research as well as the complexities of their social context, a qualitative approach lends itself better in understanding of how gay men manage their identity in the workplace. Furthermore, the research questions and the adopted theoretical framework of my research indicate that the contingency of personal and social aspects of identity are

central to the investigation, particularly, as my research aims to look at individual working lives and the degree of agency in managing their social identities in the workplace.

A qualitative approach, as anticipated, achieved richer data and captured the individual nuances of gay men's experiences in the workplace, this would have been lacking using a quantitative approach. As Ritchie et al state:

*'A major feature of qualitative methods is their facility to describe and display phenomena as experienced by the study population, **in fine tuned detail** and in the study participants' own terms.'* (Ritchie et al 2008:27) [My emphasis in bold]

As processes of identity negotiation in the workplace, in relation to how gay men challenge and modify their behaviour in the interaction order have not been researched extensively before, a flexible and iterative methodology was needed to allow for emerging themes as the work progressed.

Given the sensitive nature of the research and the need to build up a rapport with participants, it seemed more appropriate to conduct face-to-face interviews on a one-to-one basis. A group interview or a focus group would not have drawn out personal stories and incidences. Participants might have felt intimidated if I had conducted group interviews. Furthermore, there were ethical issues to consider. Sensitive issues of discrimination and revealing personal stories of harassment needed to be treated with confidentiality and understanding. A group interview would not have lent itself well in addressing this concern. In addition, I believed that focus groups or group interviews would not have allowed me to extensively explore the complexity of individual identities. I also decided to do solely face-to-face interviews rather than telephone interviews as it was necessary to build up a rapport with respondents. Telephone interviews would have made it difficult to pick up their body language and signs of any distress where I might have had to have curtailed the interview.

A key benefit of deploying qualitative research methods and in particular in-depth interviews is that it allows respondents to tell their story about their own personal

experiences. My aim was to draw out stories from gay respondents to uncover any critical incidents and moments when individuals have challenged and modified their behaviour in the interaction order. Stories and narratives played an important role in analysing identity making processes. Furthermore, as Hash and Cramer (2003) argue, in-depth interviews and stories empower members of oppressed groups and marginalised populations by giving them a voice where they were once silent. Equally, Layder (1996) argues that interviews give the opportunity for the actors themselves (in this case gay men) to describe how they see the world and not on the basis of how that world appears to the outside observer. Even though in my case, I am not an outside observer. Semi-structured interviews therefore allow the voice of once silenced, marginalised groups to be heard.

Probably the greatest strength of a qualitative approach lies in its flexibility. Interviews in particular allow a degree of flexibility not achievable through quantitative methods. Interviewing gay men allowed me to explore their own understandings, meanings and experiences as well as contextualising their narratives. Quantitative approaches or even highly structured interviews would not have allowed the opportunity of any surprises to arise. Using such quantitative techniques would be highly detrimental especially as the research is exploratory. It would also inhibit any chance of any emerging themes to appear.

Finally, as I aimed to explore the potentially sensitive issue of how gay men have managed their social identities throughout their working lives as well as to investigate whether gay men have managed their social identities differently in light of recent legislation and more liberal social attitudes towards sexuality, only a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews could achieve these objectives. As Richie et al state:

'They [in-depth interviews] are the only way to collect data where it is important to set the perspectives heard within the context of personal history or experience; where delicate or complex issues need to be explored at a detailed level.' Ritchie et al (2008:58)

This leads on to the issue of objectivity in research. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995) neutrality is impossible to obtain, and probably not a legitimate goal in qualitative

research. Lee (1993) also questions the feasibility of taking a neutral stance. Moreover, Lee argues that any spurious claims to neutrality will in fact impede the research activity. It is therefore more appropriate to use one's insider status and its ensuing benefits it entails rather than pursuing a fruitless task of neutrality. Consequently, it is, as Yip (2008:4) points out, important to declare our biases and their impact on our research. Given my personal involvement in this research as an openly gay man, striving for objectivity would be flawed. Theoretical concepts used in this study to guide the research have been influenced by my own personal experience in the workplace. During the data collection process, hunches and ideas drawn from a gay standpoint have to some extent driven and shaped the data. This does not mean that a dogmatic approach was taken with respect to the conceptual framework. Given the exploratory nature of the research, hunches and clues, as Layder (2005) argues, are necessary in order to develop and build on concepts and theory later in the research. It is for this reason why it is necessary to be reflexive of my involvement in the research process. This is particularly pertinent at the interview stage where there is personal interaction between myself and a number of gay men with varied working experiences and approaches to the management of their social identities. As Rubin and Rubin (1995) state:

'Personal involvement is a great strength of the methodology [qualitative interviewing], but it also creates problems that must be addressed. An interviewer has to be sensitive about his or her own biases, to the social and intellectual baggage that he or she brings to the interview.' Rubin and Rubin (1995:14)

Adopting a reflexive approach, as Yip (2008) points out, allows the researcher to examine where he or she sits with respect to the research, what exactly his/her involvement is and the researcher's impact on the fieldwork and data analysis. It is for this reason that I have decided to use reflection as a research strategy in order to explore my presence and baggage in the study. Reflection has allowed me to explore how my own personal involvement and identity has had an impact on the research. Furthermore, given the sensitivity of the research and its potential emotive impact, a reflexive approach has allowed me to explore how the research has affected me personally.

Reflexivity is very much in line with the feminist approach to interviewing. As discussed in respect of power relations, reflection tries to readdress the power imbalance whereby

the interview is assumed to have control. The interviewee is perceived as the object of scrutiny detached from the interviewer in line with a positivistic stance. Reflexivity aims to rebalance the inequity in the relationship.

Finally, adopting a reflexive approach, addresses some of the concerns raised above surrounding the issue of objectivity. As Ritchie et al state:

'Reflexivity is important for striving for objectivity and neutrality. We try to reflect upon ways in which bias might creep into our qualitative research practice, and acknowledge that our own backgrounds and beliefs can be relevant here.' (Ritchie et al 2008:20)

Reflexivity is particularly important given the insider status outlined above. As LaSala (2003) argues, there is the danger of the researcher developing counter transference reactions towards their interviews, which if not recognised might distort the data collection and analysis.

'If they share common experiences, researchers might mistakenly project their own feelings about their experiences onto their respondents, which could bias data collection and analysis.' LaSala (2003:20)

LaSala noted through being reflexive it brought to the surface a realisation of his frustration and irritation at the interviewees for their unwillingness to face 'reality' when respondents were unwilling to accept that they were experiencing discrimination. This was something I also experienced as discussed in depth below, during some of the interviews where some respondents did not 'see' discrimination. This may have threatened the accuracy of the data.

4.4 Recruitment strategies

4.4.1 Snowballing

In line with most research on the LGBT population (Yip 2008; Homfray 2008; Cooper 2006; Platzer and James 1997; Rumens 2008c), I used snowballing as one means of recruiting potential volunteers. As Platzer and James state:

'Using a snowball design, [is] often used with the study of sensitive topics and most frequently used where the study group is hidden, elusive, deviant or rare.'
Platzer and James (1997:627)

This observation is also noted by Browne (2005) in relation to sampling non-heterosexual women. Deploying a snowballing approach is an appropriate method in investigating a 'hidden' or 'invisible' population. This approach was also the most effective according to Rumens and Kerfoot (2009:770) in obtaining potential participants in hard to find populations. Consequently, I used snowballing techniques through my own personal networks asking friends and acquaintances to be involved. An advantage of deploying snowballing was that those who had already been interviewed could share their experience with other potential volunteers. They could also reassure others about issues of confidentiality and anonymity, trust, interview style and basic information about me. In one case, after having interviewed a junior member of one of the largest organisations in Bournemouth, this contact initiated a further volunteer in a much more senior position as well as access to the company's LGBT group. In fact, 11 out of 45 of my respondents came from referrals after having been interviewed.

There are, however, a number of limitations of snowballing as a recruitment strategy. One of the key concerns raised is over the issue of representativeness of the sample. Although not a central concern of this research, a common issue raised with snowballing is the issue of generalisability of the data. This is due to the under-representation of certain sub-groups such as ethnic minorities, disabled and working class people. At the same time, there has been an over-representation of particular groups, a concern that has been highlighted by Greene (2003) who states that:

'Most of the empirical....research on or with lesbians and gay men is still conducted with overwhelmingly white, middle class, young able-bodied participants, most often urban, college students or well-educated populations.'
Greene (2003:378 cited in Fish J 2008:7)

This observation has also been made by Hash and Cramer (2003) who noted that most American studies of LGBT populations tend to over- represent younger, male middle to

upper class, urban members. However, as discussed below in greater depth, this was not the case with my sample. I managed to obtain a wide range of occupations and ages.

It should be stated that I, in common with most qualitative research, do not wish to make generalisations from the findings. Nevertheless, I aimed to obtain a diverse sample of gay men in relation to occupation and age in order to answer my key aims and objectives, namely, how gay men have managed their social identities throughout their working lives. Thus the research aims and the theoretical background outlined earlier determined the sample.

Another concern surrounding snowballing techniques as Browne (2005) argues is the accusation of a biased sample given its non random approach (unlike most quantitative research) as well as its selection based on social networks. However, as discussed earlier, I did not intend to use the data to make generalisations nor was there any attempt to be representative about selecting proportionally from all groups or categories of the population. In any case, as Browne (2005) quite rightly points out, given the relatively small sample size obtained in qualitative research, any categorisations of certain populations, extracting one or two people as speaking for groups such as 'black', 'working class' or 'disabled' could lead to tokenism. This is where one runs the risk of homogenising categories of people. Given the above concerns, I do not intend to make claims that the sample of gay men interviewed in the data collection is a representation of all gay men. In any case, I focused my research on gay men working in the provincial coastal resort of Bournemouth, England, where the population is relatively ethnically homogenous. The reasons for choosing Bournemouth are that little research has been done on the experiences of gay men outside large urban areas either in the U.K. or the U.S. According to the 2011 census Bournemouth has a population of 183,500. However, this does not give a true picture of Bournemouth's geography. Bournemouth is situated in the largest non-industrial conurbation in Europe conjoined with Poole to its West, Christchurch to its East and Ferndown to its North. The total population of this conurbation is just under 350,000. Bournemouth Borough Council believe that Bournemouth has the fifth largest gay community in the U.K. with a well established gay

scene mostly located in an area called 'The Triangle' in the centre of town. The fact that Bournemouth has a thriving gay scene as well as a sizable gay population, were factors that facilitated data collection and the recruitment of potential respondents. In addition, Bournemouth has held a Gay Pride festival – Bourne Free since 2004, placing Bournemouth as a centre campaigning for gay equality. The main sectors of employment in the Bournemouth area comprise: financial services, tourism, leisure and retail. It is therefore not surprising that the vast majority of my respondents worked in these sectors. Previous research has mainly focused on larger urban areas, for example, Colgan et al's (2006) research focused on London and northern cities, Miller et al (2003) on Chicago and Brekhus (2003) on New York.

A further concern that I needed to take into account in relation to representativeness of the sample is the issue of how 'out' people are. In the initial screening process, as Martin and Dean (1993) observed, it might bring forward only those individuals who feel confident about their sexuality and who do not live in fear of anti-gay violence and harassment. Consequently, it might be assumed that only a certain type of gay man would be willing to state his sexual preference in the initial screening process. This might create problems in finding a representative sample of those who are 'out' and not 'out' at work and the varying degrees of openness in between. This is a point highlighted by Platzer and James (1997) who argue there are few studies that exist which investigate the lives of gay men who hide their sexual orientation from family, friends and work colleagues. Reaching such people might be problematic as they may not be linked to gay networks on which much snowball sampling relies.

Given the potential limitations of snowball sampling, I decided to recruit possible respondents from diverse sources as well as personal referrals. This recruitment strategy was recommended by Martin and Dean (1993:85) in their research on the LGBT population. Although, as Martin and Dean pointed out, this approach might not produce a random sample, it might however produce a more diverse representation of gay men. Sullivan and Losberg (2003) noted in their study of sampling in research in the field of lesbian and gay studies that friendship networks, gay and lesbian social spaces, and gay and lesbian organisations were among the most common sources of data collection. I

recruited potential volunteers at Bourne Free Pride – Bournemouth’s Gay Pride Festival in July 2010. I also visited the gay bars in Bournemouth with a clip board seeking possible respondents for a later mutually agreed interview. My objective was that this recruitment strategy might bring forward a diverse spread of ages, occupational categories and working environments. Gay Pride Festivals are a common recruitment source as previous research has shown (Martin and Dean 1993; Platzer and James 1997; Yip 2008). In total I managed to obtain 12 interviewees from the gay bars, 15 from the Bourne Free Pride festival and the remaining 18 from snowballing from either friends and acquaintances or those who had already been interviewed referring me on to others who came forward.

Nevertheless, I recognise that the representativeness of the sample is a major concern.

4.5. Sample size

As Bryman (2008) argues, it is very difficult to know in advance how many interviews are needed to conduct particularly where theoretical saturation is employed for assessing the adequacy of a sample. Nevertheless, as Ritchie et al (2008) state, it is usually the case in qualitative research that the sample size is small. In agreement with Bryman, Ritchie and Lewis argue that there will come a point in the data collection where little new ground is covered or obtained from additional interviews. In any case, in qualitative research the concern is not about the prevalence or the number of times an incidence has occurred. Unlike quantitative research there is no requirement to ensure that the sample is of a sufficient scale to be statistically significant. Even so, Warren (2002:99) argues that for a qualitative interview study to be published, the minimum number of interviews required seems to be between twenty and thirty. This seems in line with Cooper’s PhD research (2006:83) where although he interviewed twenty-one people, he discovered that after he had completed the first twelve interviews similar stories were starting to emerge. However, it is important to ensure that the samples are not too small otherwise they may miss key constituencies within the population, or contain too little diversity to explore the varying influences of different factors. On the other hand, as Richie et al (2008) note if the sample is much larger than fifty, it starts to become difficult to manage both in terms

of quality of the data collection and the depth of analysis that can be achieved with such a large sample size.

From previous qualitative research on LGBT studies, the consensus amongst academics seems to lie between twenty and fifty for this type of study. Humphrey (1999) for example, interviewed 23 gay men and lesbians in her study of openly gay public sector workers, Shallenberger (1994) interviewed 12 gay professionals, Woods and Lucas (1993) interviewed 70. In my study I interviewed 45 self-identified gay men. In my case a larger sample seemed necessary as I was looking for a wide range of experiences, occupations and ages.

In line with most research on the LGBT population (Martin and Dean 1993; Cooper 2006; Platzer and James 1997; Homfray 2008; Rumens 2008a), I used self-identification or self-definition as the primary criterion for participation. As Yip (2008:8) argues, the advantage of self-definition is that it prioritises the participants' standpoint and definition rather than imposing identity labels. In addition, for the sake of simplicity and practicality, self-definition seemed to be the most suitable means of defining the target population for sampling purposes. As Ward (2004) points out given the potential invisibility of an individual's sexual identity, obtaining a representative sample becomes problematic. Research on sexual orientation requires individuals to disclose their sexual identity to the researcher. In any case, as Martin and Dean (1993) highlight, there is little consensus among experts over the boundaries of homosexuality as discussed in Chapter 2. Not using self- definition as gay as the basis for selecting participants would have created difficulties in screening those for research. Furthermore, adopting a much broader term might have lead to significant difficulties in recruitment. Thus in keeping with the research title and the aims of the research, the study used self-definition as gay for the initial screening process. Furthermore, as Cooper (2006) observed, the majority of non-heterosexual men he interviewed identified as gay. Terms such as queer or non-heterosexual were not identifying labels commonly used by potential volunteers in how they described themselves. This of course raises a number of limitations with this approach. By using only self-defined as gay as the target population, this down plays the

fluidity of sexual identities and draws the accusation that sexual identities are stable and fixed. Although I recognise that sexual identities are socially constructed and are unstable, it is commonly assumed that identities are relatively stable. My research focuses on the voices of gay men in how they negotiate their identities in the workplace, employing self-definition as 'gay' seems an appropriate strategy.

Nevertheless, I am aware that sampling is particularly difficult as Meezan and Martin (2003:8) highlight, where the population is difficult to define, hard to reach, or resistant to identification because of potential discrimination, social isolation or other reasons that are relevant to the LGBT populations. Those who are hardest to locate and engage in research are those who do not identify with an LGBT community.

4.6. Sample Composition

In line with Humphrey (1999) and Shallenberger's (1994) research the vast majority of respondents defined themselves as being openly gay. My sample comprised 38 respondents who claimed that they were 'out' in varying degrees at work. Only 7 respondents reported that they had not disclosed their gay identity to anyone at work. The age ranged from 27 to 63 with a mean average of 41. Although I aimed to obtain a wide spread of ages, the majority of respondents were either in their 30s or 40s. I had few respondents in their 20s. Given that one of my key aims was to explore how gay men manage their gay identity throughout their working lives, a lack of younger respondents was not a major concern. Particularly, as those in their early 20s, for example, would not have had extensive work experience making it much more difficult to reflect on how they had modified or changed the way they managed their gay identity with fewer life experiences to draw upon. Previous research (Colgan et al, 2006) has noted how samples tend to over-represent white-collar middle class groupings in their studies. Shallenberger (1994) and Woods and Lucas's studies (1993) solely focused on gay professionals, whereas Humphrey (1999) and Colgan et al (2006) explored the experiences of sexual minorities in the public sector. My sample comprises a much wider range of occupational groupings from skilled manual blue collar occupations to senior management on the

board of directors of large U.K. corporations. At the time of the interview, 31 respondents worked in white collar occupations, whereas just under a third (14) was in blue-collar employment. Over two-thirds of respondents worked in the private sector with only 14 in the public sector, including five teachers. (See Appendix 6 for a detailed outline of the respondent profile). Although I aimed to obtain a varied sample, representativeness was not the key priority. My aim was to access a wide range of experiences and situational contexts in which individuals managed their gay identity.

4.7. Revealing my sexuality to interviewees

As part of a gay epistemological standpoint outlined below, it seemed appropriate to openly reveal my sexuality at the beginning of the interview process or even at the recruitment stage. Previous researchers have reflexively expressed clear benefits of being open about their identity, (Homfray 2008; Cooper 2006; Yip 2008) an approach that has been influenced by earlier studies by feminist researchers (Oakley 1981; Finch 1993; McIntosh 1997). One major benefit is the increased level of trust and rapport achieved through a shared identity. This was evident in Finch's (1993) study of the experiences of clergymen's wives. She discovered that by revealing the fact that she too was a clergyman's wife opened up the interviewee's responses creating a more beneficial experience for both parties. As Finch observed:

'I agonised over the question of whether I should reveal to my interviewees the crucial piece of information that I myself was (at the time) also married to a clergyman.... The effects of this unmasking so clearly improved the experience for all concerned that I rapidly took a decision to come clean at the beginning of each interview' (Finch 1993:172)

Finch's findings very much reflect the points raised by Oakley (1981) who argues that the shared subordinate position women hold in a male dominated society leads to a shared common identification with one another as women. The consequence of this is an enhanced genuine rapport in the interview, leading to greater self-disclosure and richer data.

Similar experiences were noted by Homfray (2008) after he revealed his sexuality to his gay and lesbian interviewees. He noticed that there was an increased level of trust and a higher level of rapport. This made it easier to elicit information from his respondents particularly over sensitive issues of matters of sexuality. The reason why respondents might have been more inclined to reveal more personal information about themselves Homfray argues, was because there was a shared recognition of the similar life experiences between the researcher and the interviewee. Homfray adds that if a heterosexual researcher had undertaken the research the responses might well have been very different in content. In fact, Homfray questions whether a heterosexual researcher would be able to discuss such sensitive topics as 'coming out' and gay and lesbian identity management unless they too had a profound knowledge on a personal level of this experience, creating a basis where both respondent and interviewer can connect. There is thus more likely to be an unspoken rapport and recognition with a shared reference which can make the interview comfortable and the respondent relaxed. This was observed by Homfray (2008) who states that:

'there is then, shared experience, such as that of coming out, or personal experience of homophobic discrimination, which cannot be transferred to the most sympathetic heterosexual.' Homfray (2008:10)

In this sense, it was anticipated that by revealing my sexuality with respondents that in return they would feel more relaxed and forthcoming with a gay identified researcher. Certainly, as Homfray has noted, given the level of sensitivity and confidentiality surrounding issues of sexuality, issues of trust are more pertinent than in most interview settings. This point is also supported by Lee (1993) who argues that particularly in sensitive research it may be more appropriate to use one's insider status to use the opportunities which allows the respondents to open up. In my case, respondents either assumed, given that I was doing research on gay men, that I was gay too or otherwise I would drop references to my sexuality. It should be pointed out that not all research has come to the conclusion that insider status has been a significant factor in opening respondents up. Hash and Cramer (2003) discovered that all of the respondents stated that it did not matter whether the researcher was gay or lesbian. Nevertheless, trust and gaining reassurance were key issues in the recruitment stage of data collection as well as

access. Previous researchers on the LGBT population have noted how it was easier to gain access by revealing an openly gay identity thus taking on an 'insider status' (Yip 2008; Cooper 2006; Homfray 2008; Platzer and James 1997), reflecting on my initial recruitment drive, I realised that individuals were initially reticent to co-operate or allow access to others. For example, access to key individuals beyond initial gatekeepers surrounding Bournemouth Gay Pride was limited until I revealed my sexuality. Interestingly Yip (2008:12) also discovered that by taking on an 'insider status', gatekeepers were more disposed to allowing access on the assumption that the researcher was more likely to manage interactions with potential respondents with greater sensitivity and tact. Equally, Ritchie et al (2008:65) make a similar case, arguing that matching characteristics (i.e. sexuality) can facilitate access to research participants in encouraging them to take part in the study. Ward (2004) noticed how being an openly gay man had helped him gain access to potential volunteers for his research. He also discovered that a common sexual identity facilitated conversational shortcuts. Reference to gay slang or gay bars and clubs did not necessitate the need for detailed clarification. In addition, insider status has the advantage as LaSala (2003) points out of having special knowledge about how and where to collect a sample. This is particularly the case with respect to snowballing techniques. Gay researchers are more likely to know gay acquaintances who can refer friends of friends. Such valuable sources might not be known or available to heterosexual investigators. I was able to use my network of friends and acquaintances to start the snowballing process.

Interestingly, if the researcher is assumed to be heterosexual, according to Homfray's (2008) observations, this might lead to possible resistance from some individuals to participate either denying access to target populations or censoring the information they provide. As one of Homfray's respondents made quite clear:

'I wouldn't have trusted you. I wouldn't have said a lot of things I said, I would have 'presented' a much more detached picture.' Homfray (2008:8)

Although insider status and a common identity might bring many benefits as outlined above, one should not ignore the possible differences between the researcher and the

interviewee in respect of class, age, ethnicity etc, which might create barriers. Assuming sameness in identity through the insider perspective does however have its drawbacks. As LaSala (2003) points out, there is great variability within the LGBT communities, an insider perspective assumes that there is commonality of experiences and consequently fails to recognise any differences. There is also the problem of the researcher 'going native', that they identify so closely with the researched population that they fail to notice what is unique and informative about their own group. LaSala (2003) also raises the point that it might also be the case that insider investigators might fail to adequately explore certain respondent perceptions and their world view, under the taken for granted assumption that the respondent's experiences and outlook are the same. Consequently, the inside investigator might in error assume common cultural understandings or fail to explore their respondents' unique perceptions. Platzer and James (1997:630) argue that insider status can make us immune to what we hear, as their respondents' are similar to our own. It was only when they presented their findings to a shocked audience that they realised the significance of their findings. Reflecting on some of the interviews I conducted, I initially ignored the significance of how some respondents took heterosexual work colleagues to gay bars until others I had presented my findings to showed surprise. Equally, social desirability effects may influence responses, where the interviewee gives responses to impress the investigator. Nevertheless a perceived common identity is more likely to achieve more open and revealing stories on the assumption of a mutual understanding or common standpoint. This was evident in Finch's (1993) interviews where common identification and mutual understanding were made around gender.

Although I was aware of the commonality of sexuality with interviewees, in line with previous research (Cooper 2006; Phellas 1998; Song and Parker 1995), I was also conscious of my difference and the impact it might have on respondents. As Taylor (2001) argues, the identity of the researcher might affect the way answers are given. Song and Parker (1995) note, for example, issues of difference between the interviewer and the interviewee including ethnicity, physical appearance and language. As part of reflection I was aware of the possible effects I might have had on the research. I felt that my own personal positioning might have had an effect on the research. In particular, my social

class, my occupation as a lecturer, my accent, and my age. I realised that using my identity as a lecturer whilst canvassing for volunteers for my research at the Bournemouth University stand of Bournemouth Gay Pride gave added legitimacy and trust to my research. It also possibly created barriers. Some interviewees might have felt intimidated by my role as a university lecturer. I was also conscious of age differences. Whilst searching for volunteers for my research in the gay bars of Bournemouth, I realised that younger possible volunteers might have perceived it as a ruse to chat them up. It might explain why I managed to recruit more volunteers who were closer to my age. Like Phellas (1998), I was also conscious of the clothes I wore both whilst out recruiting potential volunteers as well as during the interview. I tried to dress casually and not too formally in order to relax the interviewee. In addition, during interviews I was aware of the language I used. I tried to use the same language as the respondent and tried to avoid academic language.

4.8. The issue of Power relations in interviews

In line with the feminist perspective (Oakley, 1981), I believe that it is important to ensure that any power balance between the researcher and the interviewee is reduced as much as possible. Power imbalance is likely to occur when the interview is conducted as a one way process, that is, where the interviewer extracts information from the interviewee with nothing in return. According to Richie et al (2008) the introduction of power imbalance in the interview is less likely to lead to an open discussion, particularly where sensitive issues are central to the research. Thus the issue of power relations is significant to my research on identity management and discrimination in the workplace. It is for this reason that I decided to reveal information about myself and my experiences of identity management in the workplace in order to minimise exploitation of the interviewee and maintain a balance of power. Interestingly, Cooper (2006) in his research on gay identity management revealed that in his early interviews with respondents he would share some of his own experiences in order to balance the interaction. The need to minimise the power imbalance is necessary not only to create the conditions for open discussion but also due to moral and ethical grounds. Limiting the power balance will hopefully reduce the chances of the respondent feeling exploited or distraught at the end

of the interview after having revealed his soul and inner thoughts to a stranger. As Finch (1993) quite rightly states:

'the only morally defensible way for a feminist to conduct research with women is through a non-hierarchical relationship in which she is prepared to invest some of her own identity.' (Finch 1993:174)

To rebalance the power relationship I would reveal personal stories and experiences in the workplace based upon my sexuality and reflect upon how I felt and dealt with such matters. I noticed that in revealing my own stories of gay identity work respondents were more forthcoming with their own stories. This was particularly so in interviews where the respondent initially came across as cagey and reticent.

4.9. The issue of reliability

According to Ritchie et al (2008) reliability is concerned with the degree to which research can be repeated given similar methods. However, replication in this qualitative study has been hard to achieve since the research entailed in-depth interviews with a diverse set of individuals and backgrounds. Their experiences and interpretations of how they manage their social identities in the workplace were rather broad and varied. Individual meanings and interpretations of how they see themselves and how they feel they are perceived by others were unique and specific to context. Due to these issues, Ritchie et al argue that the idea of seeking reliability in qualitative research is often avoided. Instead issues of consistency and trustworthiness are used as benchmarks. One means of seeking reliability, as Seale (1999) cited in Lewis and Ritchie suggests is through reflexivity. According to Seale, reflexivity is a means of being as transparent as possible in showing readers the procedures that have led to a particular set of conclusion. Thus as discussed above, I have used reflexivity to analyse the interaction between myself and a number of gay men both in the interview process and in the interpretation of the data. In addition, given that it is difficult to define reliability in terms of measurement, if not impossible, I have therefore interpreted reliability as being about fairness and transparency. Furthermore, I would argue that supporting evidence can be provided in the form of interview transcripts and analysis making reliability more robust.

4.10. Interview setting

In order to make participants feel comfortable and at ease discussing their gay identity in the workplace it seemed appropriate to interview the participants outside the workplace. This meant conducting the research in participants' homes if they requested. As Legard, Keegan and Ward (2008:166) argue, the choice of venue for in-depth interviews should be left to the participant. However, participants were offered a choice of venues; their workplace, my workplace, their home, another quiet meeting place of their choice, wherever they felt most comfortable as long as the location was quiet enabling the recording of the interview. In fact, the vast majority chose to be interviewed in their home (27), a further 11 decided to be interviewed at my home, 2 at my university office, 2 at their workplace and the remaining 3 in public places such as bars and hotels. I tried to avoid open public spaces as the noise levels tended to interfere with the recordings making it much harder to transcribe.

4.11. Interview structure

Before each interview started, participants were asked to complete a biographical information sheet (see appendix 5). This provided me with basic demographic data and information such as age, occupation and type of organisation. This line of questioning made it less free of any demand on the interviewee to discuss sensitive issues and yielded rich contextual data about organisational life. At the same time, it aided question formulation more closely tied to the individual participant. Furthermore, as Legard et al (2008:146) argue, requesting this information at the beginning makes sense, asking for factual information in the middle of the interview can break the flow. I also asked all respondents to sign a consent form (see appendix 4) giving consent for the process of any personal information for the purposes of the study. The form confirmed that all information would be treated as strictly confidential. Respondents were reminded at this stage that they could withdraw from the research at any stage. Unlike Platzer and James's (1997) experience in the vast majority of cases I did not have to give considerable assurances about confidentiality. The main concern raised by a few respondents revolved around confirmation that their organisation would not be identified in my research. I also

asked each respondent their permission to digitally record the interview. All 45 respondents allowed me to record the interview. My main concern was to ensure that the digital recorder was close enough to obtain a clear recording without being too obtrusive. I realised after the first few interviews that it was necessary to place the recorder much closer to the respondent. Some of the early recordings were not as clear and took much longer to transcribe.

One of the main dilemmas I faced was determining how much information I should provide to potential interviewees before the interview. Although I aimed to be as honest and frank as possible regarding the content of the interview as outlined in the pro forma information sheet (see appendix 1), I avoided such loaded words such as ‘discrimination’ as a possible subject of inquiry. I noticed that when the subject was broached during the recruitment drive many potential interviewees had different understandings of the term. Some potential participants assumed I would only be interested in negative stories and experiences, which was not the case. I tried to reassure them that I was interested in a range of experiences. I was also concerned with potential anxieties that participants might have had (Rubin and Rubin 1995). Too much information prior to the interview might have prevented a more open discussion. I realised that respondents were more than likely to have anticipated what might be talked about. A number of interviewees assumed that I was only looking for ‘horror’ stories and tragic events they had experienced in their working lives. They assumed that this would make a more interesting interview. Ward (2004) came across similar accounts in his search for stories and narratives of the experiences of sexual minorities. I was conscious of the fact that respondents might use poetic licence embellishing or exaggerating their experiences in order to entertain or even shock myself as the interviewer. One of my respondents, Alfred, a deputy head of a primary school, recounted a number of shocking, tragic stories throughout his working life some of them rather sexually explicit. This raised the question in my mind whether sometimes the interviewee tells the researcher what they think the researcher wants to hear. A number of respondents believed that they were not useful candidates for my research as they did not have any ‘interesting’ stories to tell me. Given that they perceived that they had not suffered direct forms of discrimination they believed that their stories and experiences would add little value to my research. Ward (2004) came

across similar sentiments from some of his respondents in his study on sexual minorities. Like my interviewees he noted how some participants would state that they had not faced many problems with regards to their sexuality. They therefore concluded that as their lives had been uneventful that they were unworthy of note.

A factor I became acutely aware of was my involvement in the interview process. Although I tried to make the interviewee relaxed and comfortable at the start of the interview, this was not always successful especially if there seemed to be little rapport. As Cooper (2006) points out, it is impossible to predict factors such as a person's mood and issues of compatibility between the interviewer and the interviewee. One of my last respondents I interviewed, Jenson, came into this category. Jenson came across as cold and he was unresponsive to my questioning. His manner was rather curt and abrupt. Listening back over the recording, I could sense the tense atmosphere with short answers and long pauses. I realised his aloofness was probably due to his recent splitting up with his long term partner. It was not only an uncomfortable experience, but also the shortest interview. I tried to create a relaxing atmosphere starting the interview with general 'small talk' to build a rapport, but to no avail. I even tried to use probes and open ended questions, but still received short abrupt replies.

As discussed above, prior to the start of the interview I would try to engage with the interviewee in general social conversation so as to put the respondent and myself at ease. I was aware, particularly during the first few interviews, of my own anxieties having never done formal research interviews before. Typically these conversations would cover things such as their present job, the nature of the research and reassurances about how this information might be used. As at the recruitment stage, I tried to make it clear what the purpose of the research was. I informed them that data drawn from the interview would possibly be used in my PhD as well as future publications. I also did not want interviewees to misunderstand the nature of my research. For example, one respondent, Stuart, presumed that I might be able to help him in his grievance at work based upon alleged homophobic bullying from one of his co-workers. I reassured him that my research was not aiming to create specific policy recommendations or to stamp out homophobia in the workplace.

At the start of the interview I would restate the aims of the study and how the interview was structured. Potential themes for discussion were briefly mentioned in order to give some indication of what we might talk about. I tried to minimise any anxiety by reaffirming confidentiality and anonymity.

I realised with regards to the structure of the interview that it was important not to jump in with the most sensitive questions. As Legard et al (2008:144) advise, the researcher needs to ease the interviewee down from the everyday social level to a deeper level, then towards the end of the interview bring the interviewees back to the everyday level. It was for this reason that the initial theme was based on more neutral territory surrounding the participant's organisation, company policy towards diversity, organisational culture etc rather than focusing on the interviewee directly.

An additional concern was determining to what degree I shared information about my own experiences as a gay man in the workplace, in order to balance the interaction. As Platzer and James (1997) discovered, they felt that it was important to share information about themselves to minimise exploitation and to reduce any power imbalance between the interviewer and the interviewee. I therefore, revealed my own personal experiences particularly in the pilot interviews. As with previous research on sexual minorities (Platzer and James 1997; Cooper 2006; Keenan 2006; Rumens 2008c), I decided to share my own experiences and stories in the workplace as a gay man. I particularly did this where respondents were not so forthcoming or had difficulty in reflecting on how they managed their gay identity throughout their working lives. Keenan felt in his study of gay clergymen that recounting his own experiences and stories as a gay man created greater openness from respondents. Similarly, Rumens believed that disclosing his own experiences facilitated triggers from respondents in relation to their own personal experiences, as Phellas (1998) discovered in reflecting on his study of gay Cypriot men recalled:

'It seemed to me that the more I disclosed about my own sexual lifestyle, family background, coming out, personal relationships the more safe they felt to open up to me.' Phellas (1998:17)

One of my key research objectives was to get respondents to reflect on how they managed their gay identity throughout their working lives. I wanted them to reflect on how they might have modified or adapted in the way they presented their gay identity in light of job changes, different work contexts etc. Even though I gave my own examples, quite a number of respondents found it difficult to reflect. A few respondents, in fact, believed that how they managed their gay identity had not changed irrespective of changing social contexts and situations. Jack, who had started his career in the Army in the 1990s and was now owner and manager of a gay lifestyle store was a good example of this even though the social context and occupation had radically changed. As illustrated in this piece of transcript:

SR: Throughout your working life in what ways would you say you have changed or adapted how you manage your identity in the last ten, fifteen years?

Jack: I don't think I've changed much at all. I still do whatever I did back then.

Some of the respondents also showed contradictions in their stories. As noted above, one of the reasons why a reflexive approach is useful is that it brings to attention my own personal involvement in the research. I realised my own frustrations when listening to respondents in not 'seeing reality'. A few respondents, for example, did not see derogatory nicknames as being discriminatory or that there were any issues in the workplace with regards to their sexuality. Kris, a taxi driver, was a good example of this:

SR: Why would you say it is gay friendly?

Kris: Because I feel very comfortable there. And it's gay friendly, but they just rip the piss out of me. They call me a faggot, flamer, what have you. But there is no malice behind it.

On reflection, I realise that this might have threatened the accuracy of the data. I ensured, however, that I did not influence the respondents' standpoints by expressing my own views or displaying signs of dismay in my body language. I also avoided value laden questions. Nevertheless, I concur with the sentiments expressed by Platzer and James (1997:630) as 'insiders' themselves, where they felt it was absurd to *feign ignorant neutrality*. At times, I empathised with the respondent, particularly when they were recounting emotionally distressing stories.

In line with previous research on sexual minorities (Burke 1993; Ward 2008; Shallenberger 1994) I deployed semi-structured interviews lasting between 50 minutes and one and a half hours. Previous researchers have recommended this style of interview especially if the aim is to elicit stories and personal narratives. It also gives greater control and freedom to respondents. I created an interview guide structured around a number of themes identified from my conceptual framework. These themes included; the organisational context, the internal dimensions of identity, the external dimensions of identity and the reactions of others to a gay identity and finally, reflections on how they managed their gay identity throughout their working lives. Although the interviews were semi-structured I realised that there needed to be some flexibility in the sequence of questions. On a number of occasions, interviewees would answer a question that was to be addressed later on making the need to ask the question redundant. I felt that some respondents felt constrained by a semi-structured interview and wanted to recount their personal experiences and stories irrespective of the questions being asked. In Stuart's case, for example, a mental health nurse, it was evident that his main motivation for volunteering to be interviewed was to tell me about his grievance he had taken out against alleged homophobic abuse from a work colleague. The pent up anger and frustration that he conveyed made it absurd to follow the series of questions in the sequence I had intended. Given that he had given up his free time and volunteered to do the interview I was conscious of the fact that I did not want to appear rude by interrupting him too frequently breaking up the flow to his stories. As Rubin and Rubin (1995) advised, I tried to limit the number of probes. Nevertheless, probes were necessary. As Ward (2008) points out, not everyone is a good storyteller. A few interviewees had difficulty in expressing themselves, giving context to their stories. I realised that probes were necessary to obtain clarity and to understand the key protagonists. As my experience of interviewing increased I gained more confidence, it also became easier to cover the main themes in a more flexible manner. Consequently, after the initial interviews, my newly gained confidence allowed me to be more flexible in my approach letting respondents pursue their own trains of thought and develop their own ideas.

As I became a more effective interviewer, I realised that I was using probes more effectively, pressing where necessary for additional information or greater clarity. However, as feminist researcher, Oakley (1981) pointed out there is the possibility of uncovering painful memories or emotions during an interview. In light of Rubin and Rubin's advice (1995), I was also conscious of how far I could push for information.

'Another potentially ambiguous ethical area is the decision on how hard to press someone for information. Your overall guideline might be to push for information, but to stop if the interviewee seems upset or threatened.'
Rubin and Rubin (1995:97)

Having uncovered a theme around stereotyping and nicknaming from earlier interviews, I pressed for additional information from one respondent, Paul, a sales assistant, regarding his feelings towards being called 'Pauline the drama queen.' I realised, however, that he was becoming uncomfortable with the questioning and I had to stop the interview. I was conscious of the fact that I did not want to 'damage' the interviewee by pushing the probing too far. As illustrated in this extract from the transcript.

SR: *Do you think you try and play up to gay stereotypes of what they expect you to be?*

Paul: *I mince anyway! I am quite short and I walk quite fast so they always say I power mince up and down the store (laughs).*

SR: *What about the lads at work? Do they stereotype you?*

Paul: *No, I don't say they stereotype me. I don't know.*

SR: *How do you feel about being called 'Pauline the drama queen.'*

Paul: *Yeah, I don't know whether I want to carry on doing this. I feel a bit uncomfortable.*

Although I gave Paul the opportunity for a break in the interview with the premise of restarting, Paul decided not to carry on with the interview. He later admitted that the anniversary of his father's death and his health problems were probably mitigating circumstances. Having learnt from this experience, I was conscious of not pushing respondents too hard, particularly where respondents were recounting critical incidents of a discriminatory nature. On some occasions, I returned back to these incidents later in the interview exploring in greater detail elements that seemed particularly salient. A few respondents recounted experiences in the workplace that could be classified as 'heroic' stories. Interviewees such as Ivan, Alan and Neal, recalled incidents where they faced

adversity based upon their sexuality. A common theme was how they portrayed themselves as strong individuals willing to fight such incidents head on. It was only later in the interview with additional probing that these same respondents revealed the hurt they felt revealing themselves as also victims of the stories.

One of the advantages of face-to-face interviews was that it allowed clarification of any misunderstandings. For example, occasionally respondents used slang terms that I was not familiar with. Ivan, for example, used a word that I had not come across before, 'breeder', a derogatory term to refer to heterosexuals. Similarly, although I made sure that I used simple, everyday language, there were moments when respondents misunderstood the terms I used. For example, Stuart, a mental health nurse misunderstood the term 'a gay friendly organisation' as being a place where it is easier to pick up another gay man! Face-to-face interviews allowed me the opportunity to clear up any misunderstandings.

Before embarking on the fieldwork, I decided to conduct a pilot interview. Given that I had never done formal research interviews before, I felt it would be better to do the pilot interview with someone I knew. This made sense as I was feeling a little nervous and was not as confident in my interview style. I noticed that the questions and probes were not so free flowing as in the interviews I did towards the latter part of the fieldwork. I also wanted to test out the language and style of the questions to ensure there were no misunderstandings. For example, I rephrased one of the questions to ask them how important their sexuality was in how they defined themselves. After the pilot interview, I made minor modifications to the interview schedule in light of issues raised by interviewees. For example, I added minor questions around whether they ever used humour in their gay identity management or if they ever played up to expected stereotypes. The pilot interview also gave me the opportunity to listen to the recorded interview and review my interview style. I noticed that on occasion I did not probe deep enough or missed out important information. For example, in the pilot interview, the respondent talked about 'the gay issue' in his workplace but I did not explore what he meant by this.

At the end of the interview many interviewees expressed how they enjoyed the experience. They had found it thought provoking, making them think about themselves regarding their sexuality in ways they had not done before. In line with Platzer and James' study (1997) on sexual minorities, respondents found being interviewed a therapeutic experience.

4.12. Data Analysis

The first stage before analysis could take place was to familiarise myself with the data (Ritchie et al, 2008). I followed this advice by listening to the audio recordings after each interview. In addition, I penned down my initial thoughts and reactions about how the interview went. By doing so, I created a memo of emerging thoughts and ideas as I carried out the data collection. After listening to each audio recording I transcribed them. I realised that the transcription process was a time consuming and laborious process. Particularly as each interview had to be transcribed in full. Nevertheless, by transcribing each interview one by one, it provided an opportunity to start thinking about the meaning of the stories and narratives that evolved. Transcribing each one soon after the interview took place allowed me to refine and make necessary changes to the interview guide in order to improve upon the interview process.

Once I was reasonably familiar with the data, initial (and possibly provisional) themes and concepts were identified. This process is defined by Richie et al, (2008) as building 'conceptual scaffolding', where the foundations of the structure are starting to be put into place. This is not to say that I was working from a completely blank canvass. It would have been unrealistic to expect a bolt of inspiration to come flying off the page. I also used Layder's (1996) Adaptive Theory to guide the research findings and analysis. The benefit of Adaptive Theory and taking a thematic approach is that it enabled me to use pre-existing theory from my conceptual framework to identify key themes and concepts from the raw data and at the same time allow the generation of emerging theory. Prior theory was therefore deployed to address my original research questions allowing at the same time a degree of flexibility in order for emerging themes and concepts to develop.

A thematic approach was chosen as I wanted to explore different themes around how gay men saw their gay identity, their interaction with others and how they believed others in the workplace saw them. Although there were a number of critical incidents that participants relayed to me during the interviews of how they managed their identity in the workplace, I did not choose to deploy critical incident analysis as a means of analysing the data. Primarily as the research was exploring how gay men managed their identity throughout their working lives. Critical incident analysis would only have captured brief moments in their lives in their interactions with others. One of the key objectives was to explore the reflective journey participants had been through. Critical incident analysis alone might not have captured this aspect. I also chose not to analyse the data using discourse analysis as the focus of the research was not about exploring the use of language in specific contexts or how things were said, rather the focus was on giving gay men a voice and understanding the ways they managed their gay identity in different interactions and work contexts. Finally, although respondents recounted a number of stories during the interviews, I decided not to analyse the data using solely narrative analysis. Stories were important in understanding the ways gay men presented themselves as well as highlighting the ways they challenged and conformed in how they managed their gay identity. Nevertheless, stories alone would not have covered all the themes I aimed to explore such as how important they saw their sexuality in how it defined them.

The themes in Table 4 below illustrate some of the themes that were pre-determined (driven from the conceptual framework and the literature) and themes that emerged during the data collection.

Table 4: Examples of pre-determined and emergent themes created in Nvivo8

Pre-determined themes drawn from conceptual framework	Emergent themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Importance of a gay identity• Political identity• Conformity in the workplace• Challenging identity labels• Educating others of a gay existence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isolating oneself in the workplace• Humour in identity management• Playing up to stereotypes• Controlling information about sexuality as a sign of strength• The incongruity of authority roles with a gay identity.

As themes and concepts started to emerge, preliminary codes were deployed with the aid of Nvivo 8 analytical software. These codes needed some refinement after an initial application. As the data collection expanded, additional codes were added, whereas other codes were collapsed or amalgamated into other categories as they become too refined (Richie et al 2008). Through the use of Nvivo 8 software, I created free nodes and tree nodes. Free nodes allow a cluster of ideas to be gathered together. It also allowed me to make constant comparisons among the different cases. One of the key benefits of Nvivo 8 was that it allowed me to find patterns in the data. For example, I was able to cross reference all respondents with how they dealt with gay identity disclosure against the social context of organisational policies on sexual orientation, awareness of other gay employees, whether they worked in male dominated workplaces etc.

After I had identified the key themes and common patterns from the data, the next stage was to interpret the data through writing a findings chapter. Each of the findings chapters was based around respondent narratives, relevant theoretical concepts and parallel empirical studies to address my research questions discussed in the literature review.

4.13. Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the main methodological challenges that I faced throughout the research process. I have discussed the main ethical issues which arose. I have reflexively explored my personal involvement with the study participants as well as illustrating critical incidents where I have learnt and developed myself. At the same time, I have tried to convey some of the methodological limitations as well as my own personal failings.

The thesis now moves on to present the discussion and analysis from data extracted from the fieldwork. The findings chapters are organised around Jenkins' (2008) theoretical framework on identity construction. The first findings chapter is based around the setting of the social context in which gay men manage their gay identity. The second findings chapter focuses on the self namely the internal dimensions of identity. Following this, the third chapter investigates the perceived reactions of others that others attached to a gay identity. Finally, in the last empirical chapter, I explore the situational setting analysing how my sample of gay men challenged, educated or modified how they presented their gay identity in light of interaction with others.

Chapter 5

The impact of workplace climate and context on disclosure.

5.1. Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, there have been a number of comparative studies where the focus of research has been an exploration of the impact of social context and work setting on gay identity disclosure/ non-disclosure. This research has mainly emanated from the U.S. (e.g. Day and Schoenrade, 1997, 2000; Ragins and Cornwell, 2001; Ragins et al, 2003, Griffith and Hebl 2002). Probably due to the influence of the concept ‘managing diversity’ (Thomas, 1990) and its focus on how diversity policies can affect organisational performance, this literature has investigated the link between social context (top management support, diversity policies and organisational climate) and issues of commitment, employee satisfaction and performance. All of these studies named above have been quantitative in nature. Although this body of research has identified the factors that create a more ‘gay friendly’ organisational climate raising LGBT’s levels of commitment and performance, these studies do not take this research further in exploring how individuals have adapted and modified their gay identity throughout their careers from one workplace to the next. By exploring the different workplace contexts my respondents experienced, my findings aim to fill this gap. In particular, this chapter sheds light on the micro-level situational factors that respondents find themselves in, an area that is lacking in previous quantitative research outlined above. A further contribution that this chapter aims to make is to draw comparisons not only amongst the respondents but also to analyse how individuals have adapted or changed the management of their gay identity dependent upon changing workplace environments throughout their working lives. The previous literature outlined above has primarily focused on the link between disclosure/non-disclosure of a gay identity and work environment. Given that the majority of my interviewees were ‘out’ in their current workplace at least, my research findings aim to go beyond the issue of disclosure/non-disclosure to investigate the constraints and freedom gay men have in managing a gay identity, whether they feel they can be more assertive and expressive in the way they manage their identity. Given the quantitative approach taken by previous studies there

has been little focus on the different circumstances and experiences that individuals endure. As Jenkins argues:

'What it [a gay identity] means virtually depends on individual circumstances. It is one thing to be a gay television producer, another to be a gay doctor and quite another to be a gay clergyman. Being gay in London with a flourishing gay scene is likely to be quite different to being gay in say, a rural village in Norfolk.'
Jenkins (2008:100)

Using the argument raised in the above quote, this chapter will explore the different circumstances that influence the ways my sample of gay men managed their gay identity in the workplace. All the respondents in my study were working in Bournemouth or the surrounding area at the time of the interviews and as stated in Chapter 4, the town has a vibrant gay scene. My research solely focuses on the different social contexts, occupations and workplaces rather than the geographical location. This chapter will investigate the impact of organisational context and compare and contrast the ways my sample of gay men have responded and reacted to their environment. I have used the Stonewall equality index³ as a basis for defining a 'gay friendly' organisation. In particular, the following factors are explored: the presence of gay work colleagues and gay senior managers, the impact of supportive co-workers and senior managers, the impact of both informal and in-company LGBT networks and unions, the impact of organisational anti-discrimination policies on sexual orientation, the level of diversity training, the impact of working in male dominated workplaces and the impact of recent legislation. In so doing I aim to answer one of my key research questions, namely:

- How do different organisational contexts impact upon the ways gay men manage their gay identity and disclosure issues in the workplace?

The first factor I aim to explore is the impact of the presence of gay co-workers and senior managers has on how gay men manage their gay identity in the workplace.

³ The Stonewall Equality Index 2012 comprises 25 questions as a basis of evaluating the 'gay friendliness' of an organisation. These questions are grouped into the following categories; organisational policies on tackling discrimination against LGB staff, the level of seniority of LGB champions, the existence of an LGB employee network, diversity training on LGB issues, visible gay role models and openly LGB people at senior level.

5.2. The presence of gay co-workers and gay senior managers

One key factor that may impact on the way gay men manage their gay identity in the workplace is the degree to which an organisation is deemed 'gay friendly'. During the interviews I asked all 45 respondents whether they felt the organisation they worked for was 'gay friendly'. The question was an exploratory one in order to obtain an understanding of the social context that the interviewees worked in and the possible constraints that the organisational climate⁴ might place on individuals in managing a gay identity. As with previous research (Williams et al 2009; Colgan et al 2007; Rumens and Kerfoot 2009), I did not predefine what the term 'gay friendly' meant. I decided to leave it to the interviewees to interpret the term. In so doing, I wanted to explore how they defined 'gay friendly' and their perceptions of what a 'gay friendly' organisation meant to them. In an earlier piece of research Giuffre, Dellinger and Williams, (2008) define 'gay friendly' in terms of an organisation's willingness to eradicate homophobia and heterosexism. They argue that gay friendliness is not solely tolerating LGB workers but also accepting and welcoming them in the workplace. Nearly three quarters of respondents (32) felt that their organisation was 'gay friendly'. Ten respondents equated the ability to disclose their sexual identity or the visible presence of other gay employees as an indicator of a 'gay friendly' organisation. Over 70 per cent of interviewees (32) were aware of other gay employees in their workplace. This was an unexpected finding, especially as I had tried to obtain a wide range of occupations and work contexts in my sample beyond those that might be deemed stereotypically as predisposed towards gay men. In some cases (12) respondents were aware of openly gay senior managers. Such a high visible presence would seem to suggest that gay men feel they can be more open about their sexuality in the workplace compared to organisations where respondents were unaware of any other gay employees. My findings draw parallels with Ragins and Cornwall's (2001) study in the U.S. They discovered that in organisations where gay men were aware of others who had publicly revealed their sexuality they were more likely to 'come out' themselves. This was particularly the case where they had not suffered negative consequences. My findings revealed a close association between the

⁴ Organisational climate I would define here as the extent to which there is an acceptance of gay men in the workplace.

respondents' perceptions of whether they felt their organisation was 'gay friendly' and the disclosure of their sexuality to others in the workplace. Twenty-eight out of thirty-two respondents who perceived their organisation as 'gay friendly' had also disclosed their gay identity to others in the workplace. These findings would also seem to bear some resemblance to Ragins et al's (2003) study in the U.S. where they discovered that individuals who were open about their sexuality at work were more likely to be employed in 'gay friendly' organisations. They were also more likely to have gay co-workers. Although the presence of gay employees does not necessarily mean an organisation is 'gay friendly' it is nevertheless, as Colgan and McKearney (2009:13) argue one indication of an LGB friendly workplace. 40 per cent of respondents (18) felt that the presence of gay co-workers gave a sense of reassurance and comfort. Callum's sentiments were a typical example when he first joined the organisation five years ago:

'I suppose that [the presence of other gay employees] helped me when I first started work....that gave me a bit of confidence to be who I was at work and not to worry about what people thought.' Callum, 29, area manager for a leading retail bank.

Similarly, Robert contrasted the difference in how he manages his gay identity in his present organisation to his previous one. He now works at a life assurance company where the building is nicknamed 'fairy towers' because of its large gay presence. This is markedly different to his previous organisation, a retail bank, which he had worked at 20 years ago, before joining the insurance company. Robert believed he was the sole gay employee.

'There was probably ninety staff and I couldn't have told you of one other person who was gay in the bank and I felt very, very on my own. And [I] didn't feel as though I could talk to anybody back in those days. I mean you go into work on Mondays and they ask you how the weekend was and I was very guarded about what I said because I didn't want people knowing that I was gay.' Robert, 46, team manager for a life assurance company, 'out' in present organisation.

The difference in how he manages his gay identity could not be more striking. In his present organisation he no longer feels that he has to be so guarded and feels that being gay is 'no longer an issue'. He has now openly disclosed his gay identity to members of his team.

Likewise the presence of openly gay employees in senior positions created a sense of reassurance and inclusion among a number of respondents. As reflected in Greg's sentiments:

'It was reassuring that there were a few people [openly gay employees] there...and a couple of them were in quite senior positions. So yeah, on reflection that was reassuring.' Greg, 45, business manager for a life assurance company.

This was also reflected in Nigel's secondary school, where he felt that the fact that the gay deputy head was also gay had been mutually comforting to both himself and the deputy head.

'And he did actually say it [Nigel also being gay and 'out' at work] did make him feel a feel of a lot more comfortable in terms of being 'out' at school to colleagues.' Nigel, 29, secondary school teacher.

Working with other openly gay employees not only makes it easier to disclose a gay identity in the workplace as discussed in the stories above but may also create a less hostile environment. Ragins and Cornwell (2001), Ragins et al (2007) concluded in their study in the U.S. that there was a tendency to report less discrimination and harassment where gay and lesbian employees were working with other gay and/or lesbian colleagues. Similarly, Ferfolja and Hopkins (2013) found that the presence of other gay and lesbian work colleagues created a more positive and supportive environment, making disclosure much easier. A few respondents (7) had worked in organisations with a large numerically visible gay presence. All of these respondents defined themselves as 'out' in the workplace. The relatively numerically large gay presence in their respective organisations probably facilitated the disclosure of their gay identity. However, unlike Ragins and Cornwell's findings, this did not necessarily mean that they reported less discrimination. In fact, probably the fact that there was a strong gay presence gave some respondents such as Stuart, a mental health support nurse, the impetus to put in a grievance against a fellow nurse whom he perceived as making homophobic remarks about him (as discussed in greater depth in Chapter 8). He was also supported by a union that had been very active on LGBT issues.

An unexpected finding that brought to the fore new issues was Dean's experience of working in an organisation where gay men were numerically dominant. In Collinson and Collinson's (1989:95) study of factory workers, they noted how discourse around men's (heterosexual) sexuality manifested itself in social interaction and everyday life on the shop floor. Collinson and Collinson discovered that the men would consider it 'normal' and 'natural' to talk explicitly about sexuality. Such discourses were a powerful means of developing group norms, placing great pressure to conform. Alternative discourses would raise serious questions about the individual's masculinity. Their study solely focused on male heterosexual shop floor workers. My findings add to Collinson and Collinson's work where dominant discourses around sexuality are not just common amongst male heterosexual shop floor workers, but also where gay men are numerically dominant. An example of this was Dean's experience whilst working for a HIV charity 5 years ago.

'I would say the majority [were gay] and that was the problem because it meant that gay men tended to dominate the service and it became less inclusive because of that. It was the thing that caused me the most problems was the behaviour and banter of gay men during the drop in sessions.....very overt banter about what they'd been up to, who they'd had on the common, who they'd been talking to on Gaydar⁵ sort of conversation. That always happens when you get groups of gay men together...In fact I had complaints made against me because I spoke to some gay men about their inappropriate behaviour and the effect it was having on the other service users. They complained about me being homophobic!.....The people who were "the same as me" were my biggest headache because of all the banter and the behaviour.' Dean, 42, client service manager for a HIV charity.

There are parallels to Collinson and Collinson's study. Dean came under pressure to conform and join in with the gay men's sexualised banter. His disapproval of such sexualised discourses alienated him from his work colleagues to the extent that they accused him of being homophobic. By not conforming to the sexualised discourses Dean was excluded from the group. Dean also felt that the dominance of the gay men made it less inclusive for other users of the service. Dean's story illustrates the powerful impact group pressure can have in determining how one manages a gay identity, a theme that reoccurs throughout this chapter. Although in Dean's case, he did not relent to this group

⁵ *Gaydar* – a world wide internet based gay, lesbian and bisexual dating site

pressure. Dean also recalled incidents of harassment from clients who were using the service. Occasionally gay clients would make sexual advances towards him whilst he was trying to give them advice and support.

Dean: Some of them tried to hit on me.

SR: How did you feel about that?

Dean: Uncomfortable really. I felt a bit insulted by it really. I just thought you are here for a certain reason and I'm here to help you with that and if you would just stop thinking of your prick for five minutes so that we can like look at your situation and find the best way to help you with that situation rather than staring at me making comments about, you know, whether I'm free for a drink this evening. I just felt challenged by it really. I didn't think it was particularly appropriate.

In many respects Dean is expressing how he feels his professional identity is being undermined where in this incident the service user primarily saw Dean through his sexuality rather than his professional identity. Surprisingly there is scant reference in the literature of incidents and the impact of sexual harassment in predominately gay workplaces.

Stuart, a mental health support worker, was another example where the social context of a strong gay presence gave him the opportunity to openly express his sexuality in what some would perceive as a crude manner to his gay co-workers.

'Our ward clerk, George, he's gay and we was going on about Ronaldo one day. And I said yeah, I've got nude pictures of what someone sent me of him. And then he's like, god fucking hell, you know these are straight men and they were sort of shocked by the way we talked.' Stuart, 41, mental health support worker.

Stuart justified his behaviour by arguing that given his heterosexual male colleagues would engage in sexualised banter it was legitimate for him to do so as well. In some respects, in the examples above, where gay men were numerically dominant, they were replicating the same behaviour witnessed in Collinson and Collinson's research. Williams et al's findings (2009) in their study of gay friendly organisations would seem to resonate with my own. They noted the sexual horseplay amongst gay members of staff. They characterised workplaces as being 'very sexualised' in organisations where there was a predominately gay workforce. Williams et al, however, do not problematise such

sexualised banter. They do not explore how this might impact on group pressures to conform or the effects it might have on individuals who might feel uncomfortable with such discourses. There is indeed scant previous research on how gay men might come under pressure to conform in the way they manage their gay identity where gay men are numerically dominant in the workplace. My findings add to the literature in highlighting that pressures to conform are not solely confined to heterosexual male dominated workplaces but also where gay men are numerically dominant too. Furthermore, in line with Connell's (1995, 2000) theory of 'multiple masculinities', my findings uncover a particular type of gay masculinity where gay men would engage in sexualised banter, possibly asserting their sexual prowess.

It is probably unsurprising that there was a close connection with those occupations that were perceived as stereotypically gay with also having a numerically large gay presence. As Ron, a sales assistant in a soft furnishings department pointed out:

'It was a curtain department. Plus, plus equals gay basically. And generally not just in the department, there was a lot of gay men there, which I found to my delight when I applied to work there. And I think that any man that started there was considered gay until proven otherwise...It [the organisational climate] was very accepting. You didn't have to 'come out' to anyone because everyone assumed you were gay anyway.' Ron, 45, sales assistant for leading retail chain, 'out' at work.

Although I tried to obtain a wide range of occupations and work contexts in my sample, a small number (4) working in retail and the nursing profession (deemed as feminised professions) could arguably be perceived as 'gay professions'. All of these respondents had openly disclosed their gay identity at the earliest opportunity or assumed as in Ron's case, that others would presume they were gay by default. These respondents felt it was easier to disclose a gay identity in their respective organisations, possibly because they had multiple favourable situational factors such as, a strong gay presence, company anti-discrimination policies, diversity training on sexual orientation and top management support. Disclosing their gay identity was less problematic compared to those working in more male dominated organisations experiencing multiple constraints in how they managed their gay identity. As discussed later in this chapter, of the seven respondents

who worked in male dominated manual occupations, only one was aware of another gay employee.

Just over a quarter of respondents (12) were aware of openly gay employees in senior positions. For some respondents these senior managers were role models in the eyes of subordinates. They were an inspiration for both Adam, an IT technician and Isaac, a financial manager in deciding to 'come out' at work. As Isaac recalls:

'I think it's having been in that environment and actually then being exposed to that, you know, like getting to meet some very senior managers who were openly gay and not afraid to talk about it...I think beforehand I was always worried that it would be a career detriment...to actually see that obviously it hadn't affected their careers because they were managing directors and above talking very openly in social settings about their partners...and feel like I didn't care. I no longer felt that it was a concern that I need to have.' Isaac, 41, financial manager, 'out' at work.

In the above quote, Isaac mentioned, prior to meeting senior gay managers, his fear that an openly gay identity would have a negative impact on his career. It would seem that having visible gay senior managers created a climate where he felt he could be more open about his own sexuality. The presence of openly gay senior managers was highly symbolic and a key indicator of a 'gay friendly' organisation. Knowing that other gay men had managed to be open about their sexuality without any negative effects gave Isaac the go ahead to disclose his own sexuality even to the extent of being an active member of the company's LGBT network. Again these findings bear some resemblance with Ragins et al's (2003:63) study in the U.S. where they discovered through quantitative analysis of 534 gay employees that those respondents who had gay line managers reported less workplace discrimination than those who had heterosexual line managers thus suggesting a more inclusive working environment. However, Ragins et al do not take this further by looking at the process of change in how gay men manage their gay identity from one social context to another throughout their working lives. It is interesting that all 12 respondents who were aware of openly gay senior managers or had gay line managers had also disclosed their own sexual identity in the workplace. The common sentiment expressed amongst this group was that being aware of gay men in

senior positions made it easier to disclose a gay identity at work. Possibly being aware of openly gay senior managers was a strong sign that it was a safe environment in which to disclose one's sexual identity. On the other hand, of those respondents who perceived their workplace as not 'gay friendly' (expressed by 8) none was aware of an openly gay man in a senior position. In addition, 6 of these 8 respondents had also decided not to disclose their own sexual identity to co-workers. Again this seems to reinforce the powerful symbolism of the presence of openly gay senior managers and co-workers and its impact on gay men.

5.3. The impact of supportive co-workers and senior managers

Over a quarter of respondents (12) all of whom had made their sexuality known, recounted various levels of homophobic abuse from co-workers. On occasion others would intervene to support them. This backing was a significant factor in how respondents managed their gay identity even for those working in hostile 'non-gay friendly' working environments. Donald, for example, a gardener working in a male dominated team, recalled how a team member would aggressively stand up for him when outsiders would express homophobic comments:

'I have a colleague of mine who told me about a negative reaction [about Donald] that he dealt with in his own way....This other person said to him, "I don't know how you can work with that queer." ...[This colleague] grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and said, "Don't you talk about my friend Don like that." So that's quite a common thing as well that people stick up for me.' Donald, 43, gardener, 'out' at work.

Such support gave respondents a sense of reassurance and confidence in the way they managed their gay identity in the workplace. Kris, for example, a taxi driver, recalled how he would sometimes be vocal and outspoken with customers when faced with homophobic comments. Aware that he had the support of his work colleagues who would even intervene on his behalf gave him the impetus to tackle homophobic abuse head on:

'I wouldn't want to keep my mouth shut and I wouldn't deny anything [when faced with homophobic incidents]...but the office do look after me. They have taken the decision once or twice without me asking not to put me in the car with someone or not to put someone in the car with me just because of their general

appearance and look or if they know them so [as having possible homophobic attitudes]. Kris, 30, taxi driver, 'out' at work.

Similarly, Callum, in the position of trainee shadow advisor in a retail bank at the time, decided to admonish his line manager's behaviour in publically asking him whether he was straight or gay. Callum expressed his anger in strong vocal terms that such behaviour was unacceptable, especially as he had only joined the bank that week. Callum, however, was able to forcefully challenge his line manager knowing he had the support of the assistant manager who encouraged him and helped him put in a grievance against his line manager. It was primarily due to the support of key players that gave him the opportunity to wrest control in how or even whether he wanted his gay identity to be presented.

Three respondents who were all teachers recalled homophobic incidents in either the classroom or with members of staff. In all these cases, they managed to get support from either the deputy head or another member of staff. Pablo, who was working in a secondary school, was a typical example:

'A couple of kids tried to bully me. Like calling me 'gay boy' and I heard them. I stopped them [and] shouted at them.... got the deputy head involved, parents were called. I'm not entirely sure what he said, but he took over, the deputy head, he spoke to the parents and yes it was a bit of a homophobic incident and they were told off for that. I sort of shouted at them and how dare you do that! And just referred them to the deputy head, who was extremely good about it. He was really, really brilliant.' Pablo, 31, secondary school teacher.

In these examples, my findings reveal that for those working in hostile working environments probably the most critical factor when faced with adverse situations was the support of others whether it be co-workers or more importantly the intervention of senior managers. Surprisingly there has been a paucity of studies exploring the impact of the intervention of others in the workplace on gay identity management. Ryan and Wessel (2011), for example, explore, using quantitative analysis, what makes observers intervene when they witness sexual orientation harassment. Although they identify the motives for others to intervene they do not explore what impact this has on the victims of such harassment. Similarly, Ferfolja and Hopkins (2013) discovered that supportive

heterosexual work colleagues and allies were essential in creating a positive working environment, but do not take this further to explore whether this had impacted upon how they presented their gay identity. Finally, Rumens (2012) acknowledges the potential for cross-sex friendships between gay men and heterosexual women in the workplace as a source to combat sexual orientation discrimination, Rumens also highlights their empowering qualities. My findings shed some light on the impact of allies on gay identity management, an under-researched area.

5. 4. The impact of informal and in-company LGBT networks and unions

5.4.1. Informal networks

A few respondents recalled how the presence of other gay employees had been a support to them particularly when they felt isolated. This worked as an informal gay network. Andrew, 41, for example, reflected on his previous occupation, working in a bank fifteen years ago, where he believed he was the only gay employee. He recounted a story involving him bumping into a work colleague in a gay bar by chance in Southampton, 30 miles from his workplace. After their initial embarrassment they decided to have occasional informal meetings and chats which functioned as informal mutual support. Previous research (Ragins and Cornwall 2001; Day and Schoenrade 1997; Ferfolja and Hopkins 2013) had discovered that gay men were more likely to reveal their sexuality if they perceive they have supportive work colleagues. In this case, neither Andrew nor his work colleague had revealed their sexuality to others in their organisation. Nevertheless, their regular meetings gave them a sense of reassurance. This did not mean, as some respondents pointed out, that a shared sexual identity necessarily meant a common affinity as Rumens (2008b) discovered in his work on friendships in the workplace in the U.K. Nevertheless, an awareness of other gay co-workers, in my study, worked as a 'safety valve' as someone to turn to in moments of crisis.

An unexpected finding in the case of 4 respondents was how they had reaped the benefit of either having a gay line manager or having a gay contact in a senior position. Robert,

Neal and Dale had all used their gay contacts to get referred for positions in their present organisations. As Neal openly confessed how he got his present job:

'I kind of got my job through the [gay] landlord. He was working at X, so he just referred me for a couple of roles there....He couldn't give me a job. He could only refer me at the end of the day' Neal, senior operations supervisor for an international bank

Robert recounted a similar story experienced some twenty years ago:

'I came down for a holiday and met Malcolm [a gay man], who worked at X. Malcolm said, "Why don't you come for a job? We are always recruiting." So I came down for a job interview. Got the job, moved down about a month later.' Robert, team manager for a life assurance company.

Later on in his job at the company Robert implied that if it had not been for one of the senior gay senior managers encouraging him to go for a promotion he would not have applied for it.

SR: Do you think sometimes your progression might have been inhibited because of your sexuality?

Robert: *No, I mean if anything I didn't want to become a manager and I was pushed into it in a way or encouraged to go for it by a gay manager.'*

Although in the examples outlined above none of the respondents felt that they had got the job or promotion solely on the basis of sharing the same sexuality with the gatekeeper, they nevertheless felt that it had been a contributing factor. They all felt that they would have got the job/promotion on merit irrespective of their sexuality.

Nonetheless, Dale did feel that he had been favoured through what he referred to as 'positive discrimination.'

'I think there is sometimes a bit of positive discrimination....When I first joined X there was a guy called John and he was gay. Actually this is bad, but I think me being gay and young at the time. I think I actually would get more shifts. I think he would try and rota me more and look out for me a bit.' Dale, 36, receptionist/assistant operations manager for a leisure complex.

My findings would seem to bear a close resemblance to Shallenberger's (1994:135) study of twelve openly gay male professionals in the U.S. Shallenberger discovered that seven of his sample *had been exposed to opportunities that they would not have encountered had they not been gay*. Shallenberger came to the conclusion that some of his respondents had developed a gay version of the 'old boy's network'. Surprisingly there has been little empirical attention on the impact of gay networks and the possible ensuing advantages they entail. Previous research of homo-social networks (e.g. Kanter, 1977) has focused on white, middle class, heterosexual men. Certainly networking and taking advantage of opportunities were attributes four of my respondents had deployed. Neal, in particular, who was an active member of his company's LGBT group, used the LGBT network and his gay contacts to further his career.

'It became apparent that this [the LGBT group] would become a great resource ...Let's get to know them. Let's find out what business they work in and that's when I started making contacts because it's the old adage. It's not what you know, it's who you know. And it seemed to me visibly a primary example and it's been valuable going forward.' Neal, 27, senior operations supervisor for an international bank.

Although Neal was probably atypical of my sample, he revealed during the interview that prior to his present occupation he had used the same strategy before, using his gay contacts to obtain a sales assistant position in a retail company. My findings reveal that gay contacts have served an important role in career progression and advancement in their workplace.

5.4.2 LGBT in-company networks and unions

Nine out of fifteen respondents, where an in company LGBT networking group or a trade union with an LGBT grouping was available, were active members. The six who were not actively involved chose not to either because they were not interested or believed there were no issues that warranted the need to join an LGBT group. All of the respondents who were members of an LGBT group claimed to be openly gay at work. As with the informal channels discussed above, three of these respondents felt that in-company LGBT networks had been a positive benefit in how they managed their gay

identity in the workplace. These in-company LGBT groups were all recognised and had the backing of their organisation. Certainly the fact that these organisations were willing to give financial support to LGBT in-company networks is a sign, or a symbolic indicator, at least on the surface, of a supportive environment. My findings would seem to confirm Chrobot-Mason et al's (2001) study where they discovered a close association with a supportive working environment and a greater openness in managing a gay identity. In particular, my respondents felt that the network had opened access to those in very senior positions, something that would not have happened without the LGBT network. As Andrew observed:

'I guess one positive thing would be being part of the diversity council, being chair of the networking group. It's got my name noticed among more senior management that wouldn't have done before.' Andrew, 41, systems change co-ordinator for an international bank.

Similar observations were raised by Neal:

'Through Pride I knew senior managers and I had that communication with them that opened up this dialogue....contact with senior management, managing directors, heads of business, heads of corporate diversity and it gave me the confidence to be able to speak to people who are much more senior than I...I haven't got a problem knocking on an MD's door and saying, "Hi, have you got a minute?" ...It boosted my confidence. It was instrumental in my promotion, especially last year to supervisor.' Neal, 27, senior operations supervisor.

The two cases above would indicate that their motives for actively participating in their organisation's LGBT networking group are primarily career enhancing ones.

Four respondents who were actively involved in LGBT in-company networking groups felt that the network had boosted their confidence. In Isaac's case, the network had inspired him to 'come out' at work and to be actively involved in the LGBT group. Isaac recalled the events that transformed the way he managed his gay identity at work:

'There were a few people that were kind of 'out' and proud and ready to go and wave their banners at events and things, but I wasn't one of those. It was probably going to New York and actually seeing very visible senior managers who were openly LGBT who kind of lead by example....I think it's having been in

that environment and actually being exposed to that made me get involved.’ Isaac, 41, finance manager for an international bank.

For those respondents who were actively involved in LGBT in-company networks, the common consensus was that the network had made a significant impact in boosting their confidence and making them more assertive in how they managed their gay identity in the workplace. Andrew’s sentiments were a good example of this:

SR: *What do you think you have got out of the LGBT network?*

Andrew: *Confidence. A lot more confidence, you felt you had that support behind you.*

Similarly, Mike, 32, felt that being an active member of the in-company LGBT network had given him more confidence. It allowed him to be more vocal and forthright in tackling issues around sexuality in the workplace. He felt because he was a leading member of the network, in what Mike termed as being ‘more at the front’, he believed this gave him the platform to voice his gay identity more assertively. The LGBT group had given him a voice whereas in his previous organisation he had remained silent. My findings revealed that five of the nine respondents, Isaac, Neal, Andrew, Mike and James, were now actively involved in an in-company LGBT network, whereas in their previous occupations they had either feared disclosing their gay identity or were reluctant to challenge incidents of harassment. Neal, 27, for example, recalled the lack of organisational support in his previous occupation he worked at five years before he joined his present organisation. Neal recounted the numerous times whilst serving customers at a leading supermarket convenience store, when he would face verbal homophobic abuse from the work colleagues’ children. Neal did not take any action or challenge the perpetrators because he felt he did not have the organisational support behind him. This contrasts with his present organisation where he uses the LGBT network not only to advance his career, but also to assert his gay identity in the workplace. Neal would challenge his subordinates if they used homophobic terms in the office. Likewise, Dean, would use his role as the lesbian and gay liaison officer (LAGLO) in the police force, to assert his gay identity. He would challenge police officers for using derogatory language.

'There have been times when I've really sort of felt that I have had to challenge something that has been said....a chap was talking about what car he was going to buy and another chap who was quite a strong, charismatic member of the group sort of said, oh, you don't want to get that car, it's so gay! And most of the people in the group laughed. It was one of those moments when I thought I have to do something about this. And I didn't challenge it straightaway. I sort of waited. I sidled up next to him. I said that comment you made about that particular car being so gay. What is it about the car that is gay? So the car's effeminate? I said because that's a stereotype isn't it? It's a stereotype that anything gay is feminine or poncy or poofy and I said that's not really on, is it? And he was then sort of starting to realise what I was on about. He said, oh god have I said something? And I said, well, yes you have said something really because you know, there are a lot of your colleagues that work alongside you at the constabulary who are gay, you know, gay officers, but they're not feminine. They're not poncy or poofy and when you make a remark like that, it's so gay? You don't mean it in a nice way. You know, even though you said it jokingly, you meant it humorously, actually when you think about it, it's not a nice comment. It's actually quite offensive.' Dean, special police constable.

Dean felt a need to intervene when he heard homophobic remarks as he was the diversity champion in his region. His role as diversity champion emboldened him to be more forthright in the workplace with regards to managing his sexuality or issues on sexual orientation. In a similar vein, Nigel, 29, a secondary school teacher, felt obliged to stamp out discriminatory behaviour in his role as union representative. Prior to his arrival, he believed that the school had not been very effective in dealing with homophobic incidents. With the support of the deputy head, he put together a policy on LGBT issues. Given that others saw him as the diversity champion on sexual orientation, he felt it necessary to challenge homophobic incidents. One example he gave was when he admonished a vicar who came into the school to lead the day's assembly.

'They had this outrageous religious person in. I can't remember exactly what he said but I felt it was outrageous actually. It was something about the role of masculinity and basically referred in a derogatory way to the sort of non-masculine gay stereotype on stage. I can't remember exactly what he said, something about eating humus that's a bit gay. I did think personally that is inappropriate within a school setting. You're reinforcing a negative stereotype of gay men....I did actually go up and speak to him and said personally. I said I think it was inappropriate. He actually realised I think he stepped over the mark on that one.' Nigel, Secondary school teacher.

The social context of a supportive deputy head, who was also gay, combined with his role as union representative gave him a platform to be more assertive in the workplace in challenging homophobia. Likewise Alfred, 62, a primary school teacher, a few years ago, took advantage of a supportive union as well as a counselling service to put in a grievance against his headmaster based on the head's discriminatory behaviour towards him.

'He was very sort of very straight and he didn't like gay people. You could tell. And he kept making references to shirtlifters.... It took me by surprise and I found it shocking. It shocked me a bit. I felt it was almost like I'd been bullied and when you're bullied you freeze. It has a sort of an immobilising effect on you.... I found that period very difficult. I did stand up to it [the bullying], but in the end I took out a grievance procedure.' Alfred, 62, primary school teachers.

My findings reveal that some respondents took the opportunity they were presented with either a strong LGBT organisational network or a union to challenge others when confronted with homophobic behaviour.

5.5. The impact of organisational anti-discrimination policies

Another factor that might impact on the amount of freedom gay men have in managing and shaping their gay identity is the degree to which they have organisational support, manifested through anti-discrimination policies. I asked respondents whether they were aware of any diversity policies on sexual orientation. Just over half (24) stated that they had at least some knowledge that such policies existed. Interestingly, the vast majority of these (21) had also disclosed their sexuality to work colleagues. Some respondents might have felt that their organisation's policies on sexual orientation might have reduced their fears of disclosing their sexuality more openly in the workplace. This assumption would seem to be supported by quantitative analysis of 379 gay men and lesbians done by Griffith and Hebl (2002) in the U.S. where they noted a positive correlation between those companies having a written non-discrimination policy that includes gay/lesbian issues and disclosure behaviours. On the other hand, just under a third of respondents

(14) believed that their organisation held no policies on sexual orientation, three of whom had decided not to disclose their sexuality to anyone in their respective organisations.

Three respondents who were actively involved in their in-company LGBT network recognised the institutional support that came right from the highest level. Mike's insight into the level of top management support was a good example of this:

'I have never had any negative responses. People have to be very careful because right from our chief executive down, the message is very, very strong about diversityIt's made very clear from the very top down that this isn't just the [LGBT] group saying this. It's the chief executive.' Mike, 32, software analyst for an international bank, 'out' at work.

In Mike's case, he felt reassured that his organisation's anti-discrimination policies on sexual orientation were effective due to top management support. Such support allowed him to be visibly open about his diversity work with his co-workers. Without this support such policies might not have been taken seriously or diligently enforced. For two respondents, Andrew and Neal, management support was evident not just in policy documents but also through recognition of the diversity work they carried out for their in-company LGBT networking group. Management would give them time during working hours to dedicate to their diversity activities. This would also be recognised during their appraisals in the setting of objectives. As Andrew pointed out:

'At one point I had a very good manager who actually put down in my objectives...I think it was ten per cent or twenty per cent of my time would actually be doing that diversity work. So, you know I could afford to take a day out and go up to London and take my work and do my diversity stuff....if someone was that negative and homophobic they would not last long in the bank. I don't think the bank would keep them. They're so hot on diversity, very on top of it.' Andrew, 41, systems change co-ordinator.

My findings would seem to support the claim that where respondents had top management support they were more likely to have disclosed their sexuality to others at work. This would seem to reflect Day and Schoenrade's (1997) quantitative analysis in the U.S. where they discovered a close link between those respondents who had decided

not to reveal their sexuality and the perceived weak levels of top management support on gay rights.

My findings revealed that those respondents (four) who worked in the banking sector seemed to have the greatest level of commitment coming from the top. This would seem to support similar findings uncovered in Colgan and McKearney's (2011) study where they noted that banks tended to be diversity champions and exemplars of good practice in their commitment to equality and diversity including engagement with sexual orientation.

Although more than half of the respondents (24) were aware of company policies on sexual orientation, a few of these same respondents (five) questioned the effectiveness of these policies. Louis, for example, 32, a manager of a retail store, was cynical of the company's stance on its gay employees particularly when his HIV status became public knowledge.

'We had all these policies in place for racism and ageism and all that sort of thing, but in terms of sexuality there were no policies on that at all. It was just another word on a sheet somewhere. There was nothing specific. We never had any policies on that. I know it just wasn't really there. It just wasn't even an issue except for certain people that you could tell were biting their tongues because they knew by law they weren't allowed to out-rightly say they didn't like you because you're gay. Louis, 32, manager of a retail store, 'out' at work.

Louis recalled the lack of organisational support when he was diagnosed as HIV positive. He felt that the anti-discrimination policies the company had in place were not effective. Louis cited the example of his regional manager who he believed was homophobic. His manager would try and undermine him by questioning his performance and picking up on trivial matters even though he had exceeded his targets. When he became ill due to his HIV status, he believed that the company took an unsympathetic approach and did everything they could to push him out by making his life uncomfortable. For example, his regional manager would be petty criticising his paperwork for being too neat. He was also never happy with his sales targets even though he had consistently exceeded them. Although he tried to put in a grievance against the company, even employing a solicitor, Louis felt powerless. He eventually had a nervous breakdown and dropped his dispute. Louis' story illustrates the implementation gap between policy and practice, a story that

has been uncovered in other diversity strands (Jewson and Mason 1986; Young 1990; Cockburn 1991). Colgan et al's (2007) research of LGB's perceptions of equality policy and practice in the U.K. also uncovered similar findings even in so called 'diversity champion' organisations. They noted that although over a third of respondents strongly agreed that their organisation was gay friendly in policy this figure fell to under one in five who strongly agreed that this was also the case in practice. Even though there were a number of gay co-workers in the organisation, they were unwilling to stand up for Louis for fear of losing their jobs, illustrating the sense of powerlessness.

'Some of them had been witnesses to certain incidences with my area manager. Some of the things he'd said or the ways I'd been treated. They'd all agreed, yeah, yeah of course we'll do a statement mate.... Once it came to that moment everyone deserted me. All I can guess is that a) they were too scared about losing their own job, which within that company would be normal and by the time my solicitors got hold of them to try and get statements from them and so forth there's a good chance the company had already been in hold of them and told them to shut up because they were so scared for their own job....I can't blame them because I know full wellif they had made a statement they would have been out of a job within week..... I had just hit that point where I couldn't handle it. So I burnt all the paperwork and brought it to a close...It still haunts me to this day.' Louis, 32, retail sales manager.

Previous research (Griffith and Hebl, 2002) has shown a close link between disclosure of sexual orientation and those companies having a written non-discrimination policy that includes gay/lesbian issues. There has also been a proven link between disclosure and the presence of other gay co-workers (Ragins and Cornwall, 2001). Although these findings have been useful in identifying the factors that make it easier for an individual to disclose ones gay identity, the problem is that it solely focuses on the narrow area of disclosure and potential influencing variables. It does not explore issues beyond disclosure. Previous quantitative research does not look at the micro-level at the unique interactions and social contexts that individuals find themselves in. The limitations of this research are that it does not look at how gay men manage potentially discreditable information once that information has been disclosed. The fact of disclosure does not necessarily mean an individual is not working in a hostile environment. My findings reveal that anti-discrimination policies and an open gay identity are not enough. Although these factors might make it more likely for an individual to disclose his sexual identity, disclosure

alone does not necessarily mean that gay men have the same freedom and space to manage their sexual identity as their heterosexual counterparts. Dec, 36, for example, felt that his organisation, a manufacturing company was 'gay friendly' in terms of its policies, but this did not necessarily translate into practice in changing the attitudes of co-workers, particularly those working on the shop floor.

Likewise Roland, 63, a property project surveyor for a public authority, was sceptical over the effectiveness of his company's anti-discrimination policies. Although he was not 'out' at work, he had observed the treatment other gay and lesbian employees had received.

'It does have these policies, but at the end of the day underneath it, if they don't like you they'll find a reason to get rid of you. And I'm sure they did this with this Phillip guy...He could have gone a long way in that organisation, but I think that certain people in that place disliked the way that he was flamboyant.' Roland, 63, property project surveyor.

These stories illustrate the ways in which some respondents were constrained in how they dealt with their gay identity and the manner in which they dealt with homophobic behaviour in the workplace. It is probably because Roland had witnessed how other openly gay employees had been treated that he decided not to disclose his own gay identity. A common theme extracted from these stories is the impact of power relations. Those who were in a subordinate position were significantly constrained in how they dealt with gay identity disclosure in the workplace. Dan, 38, a market researcher, working in a call centre, for example, explained why he would not challenge homophobic comments expressed by those in senior positions:

'They could make things a bit awkward because they could use it [my sexuality] against me, especially if they're higher up than me. They'll not directly use that I'm gay but they'll dislike me for it so they'll bear a grudge. Unfortunately, that's what some religious people, it's not just religious people, some people are like. So I have to be careful.' Dan, 38, not 'out' in this workplace.

Similar findings were uncovered in Colgan et al's (2006) research, where they found that LGB workers found it difficult to disclose their gay identity where colleagues expressed fundamentalist religious opinions on sexuality. Nigel, on the other hand, an openly gay secondary school teacher, noted from his personal experience of homophobic abuse from pupils how even though state schools had policies based on discrimination they were not so effective on the sexual orientation strand.

'People are often very wary of dealing with discrimination based on sexuality, especially when it's originated from a student towards a teacher...My school is extremely good at dealing with racist issues now and those based on gender discrimination, but it's an area that people are scared to go near, largely because of the old existence of section 28.' Nigel, 29, secondary school teacher.

In light of the incidents he has experienced in his present school, Nigel with the support of top management, the deputy head, who is also gay, has developed an anti-discrimination policy specifically on sexual orientation. As Nigel stated:

'But we've actually now got a deputy head, who's gay as well as me and I'm actually very good friends with him and largely as a result of him and me to an extent. We have, and me in my role as a union representative, we have fought quite strongly to change the culture within the school..... Up until three years ago, when I and the deputy head fought for it to be changed, the assistant head who's in charge of the equality policy didn't deal with the big use of the word gay or queer at the same level as the use of the racist terms. But it was largely down to the deputy head, who insisted that issues like that were dealt with at the same level.'

In Nigel's case with the support of senior management, he was able to have some control in shaping the social context and organisational culture by changing the school's policy on equality allowing him a degree of freedom in how he managed his gay identity in the workplace, knowing that he now had some protection through the school's new policies. Central to Nigel's story is the issue of power and that through agency he was able to manage to some extent the organisational environment he worked in. A common sentiment that arose from three respondents who worked in the teaching profession was how the shadow of section 28 still had a bearing on how 'gay friendly' their school was.

There seem to be a culture of compliance rather than an open embracement of sexual diversity. As Stan a deputy head of a primary school made clear:

SR: *How would you describe the culture of the school? Would you say it was gay friendly?*

Stan: *I think accepting is probably a better phrase than gay friendly because of it being a school I think they're in a difficult position. I don't think they want to be seen to be promoting gay friendliness but they are quite accepting of me.*

Of course, it is difficult to know exactly what others in the workplace think.

Nevertheless, just accepting or tolerating someone's sexuality hardly creates a welcoming environment where one feels comfortable in disclosing or being more open. Accepting a sexual orientation different to heterosexuality does not necessarily mean equality.

Likewise, Dec, 36, working in the technical department of a manufacturing company questioned the term 'gay friendly'. He noticed a difference in reactions between the office workers where he was based and the blue collar workers on the shop floor. Like Stan, he believed that others accepted him though he still sensed their discomfort.

5.6. Sexual orientation awareness training

Another way in which an organisation might be deemed 'gay friendly' is the extent to which there is diversity training on sexual orientation given to all staff. Two of the respondents perceived their organisation as 'gay friendly' in terms of the provision of mandatory diversity awareness training on sexual orientation. Griffith and Hebl (2002) in the U.S discovered a positive correlation between diversity training that specifically includes gay/lesbian issues and disclosure of sexual identity. Again as discussed earlier, though these findings may show factors that create an environment in which gay men might feel safe to disclose their sexual identity, disclosure might be one step towards equality but in itself does not deliver equal treatment. Some respondents still experienced discrimination and harassment even though they were 'out' in the workplace. Ragins and Cornwell (2001) found that training on its own was insufficient in reducing heterosexism in the workplace. Just over a quarter of respondents (12) had received training on diversity including sexual orientation, all of whom, except for one, identified themselves

as being 'out' in the workplace. For the vast majority, the training consisted of web based tests rather than formal classes. In support of Ragins and Cornwell's findings training alone might not eradicate entrenched attitudes towards homosexuality. Peel (2002:257) postulates that education and training courses might be a method of effecting social change as has been in the case of other diversity strands such as race. Previous studies have uncovered mixed results on the effectiveness of education and sexual orientation awareness training from increased homophobia to no significant change in attitudes (Sedahley and Ziemba, 1984). However, other studies including D'Augelli (1992) have reported a positive change in attitudes as a result of education. Peter, 35, an electrician, for example, noted the discomfort of co-workers when discussions around sexuality were raised during a diversity awareness class. He also noted the resentment amongst his colleagues over the mandatory nature of the courses:

'They clearly weren't comfortable with it [discussions around homosexuality]. Maybe it is just the way they were brought up and their values might be different to mine....There is always a lot of it is forced. You know, you've got to go on this course and if you don't do it, if you're away, they book you on the next one. It's kinda cos the council tick all the boxes and so every member of staff has been on this course and is aware of diversity and equality.' Peter, electrician for the council.

Probably his work colleagues' attitudes towards homosexuality and the discomfort they showed during the training session were contributing factors in Peter's decision not to disclose his sexuality to these workers. Again Peter's story illustrates the impact of group pressures to conform. He decided to let his co-workers' comments go unchallenged in order to be accepted by them as a colleague.

5.7. 'Non-gay friendly' organisations

Another indicator of a 'gay friendly' workplace is the perception of discrimination and harassment on grounds of sexual orientation. A few respondents (eight) did not feel their organisation was 'gay friendly'. They evaluated the concept 'gay friendly' in terms of the

attitudes and levels of hostility they had faced towards homosexuality. Roy's sentiments, an electronic technician, were typical amongst this group:

'They have a very single tracked mind on what is ethical and what isn't ethical if you like. And getting married and having kids is what they like to do and it's what they do do. Anything else that's a little bit different, i.e. being gay is a big no, no in their lives.' Roy, 47, electronic technician.

According to Roy, his fellow manual workers were very closed minded. The daily banter was based on male heterosexual discourses around women, sexual conquests and alcohol consumption. In light of this, Roy decided to keep his sexual identity hidden from his work colleagues. He has thus chosen not to challenge any homophobic comments his co-workers have made in his present workplace.

Roy: if they knew that I was a shirt-lifter, if you like. How they put it.

SR: So these are the sort of words they use in everyday conversation?

Roy: Oh yeah, definitely.

SR: What do you say when they say things like that?

Roy: I don't respond. I just sit there and go very quiet, because they have had conversations about gay footballers and some of the things they've said is just downright offensive. But I just don't say anything about it. I just sit there.

SR: Why do you not say anything?

Roy: I don't know. I suppose I just don't want them to suspect.

Likewise, Aiden, 42, a picture framer/artist for an art gallery, believed that his present organisation was gay tolerant rather than 'gay friendly'.

'Gay tolerant because there are so many gay customers. You have to be....It's fine when you're dealing with someone, with other gay people, but as soon as they've got the money, they make a comment or something like that. So it wasn't exactly anti-gay, but it was a very heterosexual environment I suppose. Especially Chris, cos he would come in and he would be nice as pie to their face and they'd go and he'd make a [homophobic] comment' Aiden, 43, picture framer/artist, not 'out' in this organisation.

Again power relations came into play in influencing Aiden's decision not to disclose. Aware of his boss's attitude towards homosexuality he decided to conceal his gay identity. Six of the eight respondents who evaluated their organisation as 'non-gay friendly' had not disclosed their sexual identity to anyone in their workplace. This would

suggest that the perceived attitudes of others towards homosexuality in the workplace were a significant factor in their disclosure decisions. These findings would seem to resonate with Ragins and Cornwell's (2001) research in the U.S, where they discovered that gay employees were less likely to disclose their sexual orientation in organisations where they had seen or experienced discrimination. These six respondents all feared the consequences of disclosing their gay identity from possible dismissal to ridicule and harassment from either work colleagues or senior managers.

5.8 The impact of working in male dominated manual occupations

Seven of the respondents worked in male dominated manual occupations. Only one of these respondents was aware of another gay employee in their organisation. This is probably not surprising as previous research (Colgan et al 2006; Ellison and Gunstone, 2009) has shown that LGB workers reported that it was much harder to be open about their sexuality to co-workers in male-dominated manual occupations. Similarly, Rumens and Broomfield (2012) discovered in their study of 20 gay men in the police force that hyper-masculinised units of the police force, gay men would struggle to disclose and manage their gay identity. Table 4 below outlines the key organisational factors that constrained 10 of the respondents from disclosing their gay identity in the workplace. Seven of them worked in male dominated, blue collar, stereotypically masculine occupations. Only one of these seven had disclosed their sexuality to others in the workplace.

Table 5: Key organisational factors constraining respondents from disclosing their gay identity in the workplace.

Name	Male dominated	Stereotypically blue collar masculine workplace	Perceived hostile/negative attitude of superiors/line manager/co-workers. The Key factor	Aware of other gay employees
Roland*	Yes	Yes (Property surveyor on building sites)	Yes	Yes, but not in his dept
Alex*	Yes	Yes (Fencing contractor for military)	Yes	No
Peter*	Yes	Yes (Electrician)	Yes	Yes, not in his dept
Pat*	Yes	No, (lawyer)	Yes	No
Stefan*	Yes	Yes (Logistics haulier)	Yes	Yes, not in his dept
Aiden*	Yes	No, (Picture framer)	Yes	Yes
Daniel*	No	No, (Market researcher)	Yes	Yes
Roy*	Yes	Yes (Technician)	Yes	No
Clive*	No	Yes (Site manager)	Yes	No
Ivan	Yes	Yes (Operations manager for factory)	Yes	No

* Not disclosed their gay identity at work.

Out of all the respondents, this group probably experienced the most blatant forms of homophobic abuse and discrimination. Roland, for example, described the working environment within his organisation in justifying why he decided not to reveal his sexual identity to his work colleagues:

SR: *So why did you decide not to be 'out' in your present organisation?*

Roland: *It's quite a macho sort of situation. You know, you're working in the building industry a lot of the time. When I worked for the architects prior to being with the surveyors, there was one guy up there that was very anti-gay. His attitude was put them up against the wall and shoot them! (Roland, 63, project property surveyor.)*

Roland made comparisons with his previous workplace working in the hotel industry up until the late 1990s, where he was more open in how he managed his gay identity, even opening up a gay bed and breakfast establishment. This is in stark contrast with his present organisation within the building industry where he feels he can not disclose his sexuality as it is a 'much more macho' environment. Roland ignores homophobic comments addressed to him rather than challenge them head on.

'I bit my lip and I didn't say anything. One of my other colleagues guessed I was gay and he kept trying to make me 'come out' and he [would say] oh, here comes Roland mincing up the office again. I just ignored it. I totally blanked the whole thing, whenever anyone sort of said anything about me being gay.' Roland, 62, property surveyor.

As illustrated in Table 4, respondents who were working in male-dominated manual occupations faced multiple constraints in managing their gay identity. The working environment typically was one in which they believed they were the only gay worker in their organisation/department. As a consequence they lacked the possible support and reassurance that another gay employee might give, if it were needed, unlike those respondents who had LGBT networks and were aware of other gay employees. Furthermore, these same respondents, in the majority of cases (five), worked in companies where anti-discrimination policies on sexual orientation were either non-existent or deemed ineffective. Given these constraints it is probably not surprising that five of the respondents not only decided not to disclose their gay identity but also showed passive compliance in how they managed their gay identity. Non-challenging responses included; use of humour, ignoring discriminatory remarks and avoidance in tackling issues of discrimination (as discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7). Alex, 34, for example, a fencer, would avoid challenging his fellow co-worker, Mike, even though he had authoritative power coming from his position as manager and co-owner to wrest control. Alex realised soon after he had employed him that he held strong homophobic opinions stemming from his orthodox religious background. Alex thus decided to deploy an avoidance strategy by hiding his sexual orientation from him even though he had to work solely with him on a one-to-one basis for the vast majority of the time. Alex even

changed the name of his partner, who he was living with, from Mark to Margo in order to accommodate his co-worker's prejudices. As Alex recalled:

'I never told Mike. Yeah, because although I worked with Mike for three years and I was in a relationship with a guy called Mark. Well, Mark had to become Margo. I'd call him Margo because it was so much easier not to tell him because [he would say] "If I found out you was gay, I would fucking knock your block off!"' Alex, 34, fencing contractor, not 'out'.

Yet on a daily basis, Mike, his co-worker, would openly express his heterosexuality, in discussions around the women he had desires for sometimes in graphic detail. Alex justified the passive role he took over a three year period, accommodating Mike's homophobic values because he was deemed a very productive worker. As Alex recounted:

'When Mike first started he was very good, very quiet. He was an excellent worker and he was a good asset too to us and to be honest it would have been a shame if he had left because we wouldn't have found anyone as good as he was at the job. So it was for both our benefits and to keep the peace.... Yeah, I probably thought in time it might turn round and I could 'come out' to him, but it didn't happen.'

Alex felt because of his experience of working on construction sites in stereotypical masculine work that he was under pressure to hide his sexuality. He recalled incidents before he had employed Mike where labourers would be suspicious of his sexuality due to him not having a girlfriend. Co-workers would question the sexuality of other labourers if they did not display hegemonic forms of masculinity, even down to the leisure activities pursued. Alex would talk about his interests in motorbikes and DIY in order to be accepted by the other workers. Alex's story illustrates the multiple constraints he faced putting pressure on him to hide his gay identity including: a lack of anti-discrimination policies on sexual orientation, an absence of other openly gay colleagues compounded with working in a male dominated environment, where open displays of male heterosexuality were accepted and commonplace.

Nevertheless, even with all these impediments, one respondent, Ivan, 43, a manager, employed as a trouble shooter for a failing manufacturing company, was probably the most assertive, taking control of situations and challenging homophobic prejudice head on. Ivan experienced the most blatant forms of harassment from his subordinates on the shop floor in the last 4 years since he joined his present organisation (as discussed in more depth in Chapter 8) including the calling of derogatory homophobic terms and even one individual urinating into his mug in order to show disapproval. Ivan's case illustrates how individual factors come into play despite the adverse social context he found himself in. Probably due to Ivan's strong personality and self-confidence in his own sexuality he was willing to challenge homophobic behaviour within the factory. There were two critical factors, however, first that his position as manager gave him the authority to discipline his subordinates and secondly and probably more importantly, he had the owner's support. Ivan had the power to discipline his subordinates not just for poor performance but also for homophobic behaviour. Ivan recalled a critical moment when his authority was being challenged by the shop floor workers:

Ivan: *He was having disciplinaries and he knew his job was in jeopardy I suppose. I wasn't going anywhere and it was that stage where they realised that I wasn't. They all got together and went to see the manager direct as a party. [and the manager said] "No, he's in charge."*

SR: *Why did they go and see the director?*

Ivan: *They didn't want to work for me, really. Ivan's too, too bossy and we don't trust him. We don't want to work for a gay person.*

Beyond a cursory mention there has been little previous research on how the support of others such as work colleagues and in particular senior management, in intervening during critical moments can affect how gay men manage their gay identity. My findings shed light on this factor, only really possible in a micro study of the respondents' interactions with work colleagues. Ragins and Cornwell (2001), for example, discovered that gay men are more likely to disclose their sexual orientation if they believe they have supportive work colleagues. They do not take this further and explain the significance of supportive co-workers in managing a gay identity beyond the issue of disclosure. A limitation of this quantitative research is that they do not explore the individual

situational factors that gay men find themselves in. My findings below aim to fill this gap in the literature.

5.9. The impact of legislation

A final issue that I aimed to explore during the interviews was whether respondents felt that recent legislation had made it easier for them to manage their gay identity. Previous research (Ragins and Cornwell, 2001) in the U.S. identified that individuals were more likely to disclose their gay identity in the workplace if they had legal protection. As discussed above, my research aimed to explore these contextual factors beyond the issue of disclosure/non-disclosure to see whether respondents felt that anti-discrimination laws had given them the confidence to challenge others or be more assertive in the ways in which they managed their gay identity. At the beginning of this century there have been four important pieces of legislation (as discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2) with the intent of giving greater protection to LGBT citizens in the U.K. including: the Local Government Act: Section 28 (2003) and the introduction of the Employment Equality (SO) Regulations (2003), the Civil Partnership Act (2004) and the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2007). Just under a fifth of my respondents (8) who expressed an opinion about the impact of recent legislation felt that it had been a positive development. These respondents felt the legislation had given them more confidence in managing their gay identity at work. My findings would seem to concur with Colgan et al's (2007) study of 154 LGB respondents in the U.K. They discovered that only just over a third of respondents (34%) believed that the Regulations had made a positive difference. Nevertheless, these same respondents felt that recent legislation had made them more confident in challenging discrimination and harassment and even willing to take up a grievance if it was required. My respondents felt that the legislation had given them some protection. A few respondents who had entered civil partnerships felt that this legislation had affected their self-confidence in 'normalising' their gay identity. The legal legitimacy of their gay relationship gave them the platform to speak more openly about their sexuality. In return others could relate to them more due to their similarity to heterosexual relationships.

Nevertheless, legislation alone may not be sufficient in reducing workplace discrimination. As Ivan made clear, in reference to his own organisation (working in an environment lacking in anti-discrimination company policies), *it always depends on where you're working*. Ivan's comments imply that although equality laws are welcome, the social environment and situational factors in which one finds oneself will override such legislation. These sentiments would also seem to concur with Colgan et al's (2007) findings of LGBT workers in the U.K. They discovered that recent legislation had little effect beyond working as a basic safety net. It made little impact in changing organisational culture. A few of my respondents (three) took a cynical stance to the effectiveness of recent laws. Daniel, a market researcher, for example, felt that his organisation would still be able to discriminate against him irrespective of Acts of Parliament. It is for this reason that he has decided to keep his gay identity hidden at work.

SR: *Do you think that recent legislation has made it easier for you to manage your gay identity at work?*

Daniel: *No, not really. Cos they'll always find another way to try and get rid of me and I just know that some people are going to be very anti-gay and if they know that I'm gay and don't like gay people for whatever reason they will do their best to find other ways to get rid of me. I just know that. That's why I choose to withhold that information from them to protect myself because then they don't have [any] personal dislike to try and remove me.*

Daniel's sceptical view of the impact of recent anti-discriminatory laws was probably based on the continuing homophobic comments he would occasionally hear in the open plan office he worked in. Similarly, Roy, felt that recent legislation had had little effect in changing his co-workers' attitudes. He recalled his male colleagues' views around the recent legalisation of gay civil partnerships:

'They just think it's disgusting, that's it. It shouldn't be allowed. It's, you know, these poofs get married and all this kind of thing. They read it in the newspaper....They're very narrow minded people.' Roy, 47, electronic technician, not 'out' at work.

5.10. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have drawn upon stories, incidents and experiences that were extracted from the interviews. I have also compared and contrasted how individuals have adapted and modified the way they manage their gay identity and disclosure issues in light of changes to their working environment throughout their working lives. In addition, I have also made comparisons with those who work in organisations that might be deemed 'gay friendly' with those that are not. In so doing, I have aimed to answer my key research question at the beginning of this chapter namely whether organisational social context impacted upon the ways gay men disclose and manage their gay identity in the workplace.

In this chapter I have explored various factors that might either constrain or give respondents the opportunity to manage their gay identity more openly. These factors have been in the main analysed in isolation. A deeper analysis of the data revealed that there were two key categories that a cluster of respondents fell into. These two categories I would classify as multiple constraints and multiple opportunities. Multiple constraints I would characterise as organisational environments in which respondents experienced a number of factors that might prohibit them from disclosing their gay identity. These included: Working in male dominated workplaces, working in stereotypically masculine blue collar workplaces, perceiving or hearing negative comments from others especially from those in senior positions and finally the absence of other known gay employees. Ten respondents belonged to this category. Only one of whom had openly disclosed his gay identity in the workplace. As outlined in Table 4 above. Typical sentiments from this group was the fear of 'coming out' particularly as the vast majority had overheard homophobic remarks from their work colleagues. They thus felt that it was a hostile environment in which to work. All of these respondents apart from Ivan adopted a passive compliant approach condoning derogatory remarks, not challenging discrimination or harassment.

On the other hand, seventeen respondents worked in organisations that could be described as ‘gay friendly’. These respondents experienced multiple opportunities. Multiple opportunities I would characterise as organisational environments in which respondents experienced at least four contextual factors that gave them the freedom or greater choice in how they managed their gay identity. These included: organisational anti-discrimination policies on sexual orientation, diversity training awareness, awareness of other openly gay employees and the existence of an LGBT network or union equivalent and most importantly, top management support. Nine of these respondents I have highlighted in Table 5 below. These nine respondents had used the opportunity of a more ‘gay friendly’ environment to challenge and confront homophobic incidents in the workplace.

The Stonewall Equality Index as outlined at the beginning of this chapter has been a useful guide in breaking down the various components that make a ‘gay friendly’ environment. However, the Stonewall Equality Index treats each component with equal weighting. My findings have revealed that top management support was the most significant factor in whether respondents would disclose their sexual identity in the workplace. Furthermore, where respondents perceived senior managers had negative or hostile attitudes towards homosexuality they were much less likely to disclose. In addition, it is the accumulation of a number of these components that increases the chances of disclosure and a willingness to challenge homophobic incidents in the workplace.

Table 6: Respondents who had top management and organisational support enabling them to confront or challenge others when faced with adversity around their sexuality.

Name	LGBT network/Union	Diversity champions	Support from senior Management	Incidents where respondent confronted/challenged others in workplace
Stuart	Yes (UNISON)	Not interested	Yes	Reported work colleague for alleged homophobic comment
Ben	Yes (UNISON)	LGBT rep for UNISON	Yes	Confronted abusive comments from work colleagues
Dean	Yes	LAGLO Police officer	Yes	Confronted work colleague over derogatory use of term 'gay'
Pablo	No	No	Yes	Confronted homophobic abuse from pupils
Nigel	Yes	Union rep	Yes	Homophobic from pupils, confronted vicar
Callum	No	No	Yes	Confronted manager over untimely 'outing'
Neal	Yes	Yes, co-chair of LGBT group	Yes	Confronted subordinates over misuse of the term 'gay'
Kris	None available	No	Yes	Challenged homophobic abuse from customers
Alfred	Yes	No	No	Put in grievance against headmaster

Furthermore, all seventeen respondents in this category had identified themselves as being 'out' in the workplace. These respondents expressed how factors such as an awareness of other openly gay employees and involvement in LGBT networks had boosted their confidence. Five out of nine respondents in their previous organisation had been reluctant to challenge others, were now actively involved in an in-company LGBT group, willing to take a stand for gay equality and support fellow LGBT employees. Some respondents even took advantage of these opportunities by using their gay contacts to further their careers. Typically these respondents were less guarded in how they managed their gay identity. The vast majority in this group believed that they had 'no

issues' around their sexuality and that they had not experienced discrimination. Probably the symbolic indicators of top management support, openly gay senior managers, diversity policies and training on sexual orientation were factors which gave them more freedom in how they managed their gay identity.

Eight of these seventeen respondents recalled incidents in the workplace where others had intervened on their behalf. This support was especially important coming from top management without which it seems less likely that they would have been so forthright in challenging others. Top management support was paramount during critical moments when respondents were faced with adversity. For example, Nigel and Pablo both teachers had to get help from senior managers in order to tackle homophobic comments directed towards them. Likewise, Callum, a graduate bank trainee required the intervention of senior management in order to win his battle. In the Table 5 above, in all but one of these cases, they either had the direct support of senior management who intervened on their behalf or knew that they would be able to get their backing if necessary. Furthermore, four of the respondents in the table had taken up the opportunity offered to them by their organisation to join a company LGBT network or union with an LGBT section. It is probably because they knew their organisations supported and resourced these networks both financially and through giving them time to do their diversity work that were more willing to confront any issues head on.

The next chapter explores how gay men perceive their gay identity and how they present this identity to others in the workplace.

Chapter 6

Self-identity and identity performances

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the impact of workplace context and organisational setting on how gay men manage their gay identity in the workplace. In this chapter, drawing from my conceptual framework, I wish to focus primarily on the internal dimension of identity. The internal dimension is according to Jenkins (2008) how we see ourselves and our self-definition of who we are. Of course, in reality we cannot treat the internal dimensions of identity in isolation. Identities are interwoven and inextricably linked. The two components, the internal and external dimensions impact and influence each other. How we see ourselves is very much dependent on how others see us. As Jenkins argues, drawing from the works of Mead (1934):

‘An understanding of selfhood as an ongoing and, in practice, simultaneous synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others.’ Jenkins (2008:40).

Self-identification or the internal dimensions according to Jenkins involves a two-way ongoing process between the internal and the external dialectic. Thus the internal dimension of identity requires a degree of reflexivity on behalf of the individual. Our self-identities are in flux, being modified and adapted in light of the feedback we receive from others. Consequently I wish to explore the ways in which gay men construct and reconstruct their internal dimension of identity in the light of how they interpret the reactions of others in the workplace. The focus of this chapter and its contribution to the body of knowledge surrounding the experiences of gay men in the workplace is to focus on the reflective processes that my sample of gay men has undergone. In particular, this chapter will explore how my respondents have modified how they see themselves, the level of importance they have attached to their gay identity and their self presentation in their working lives.

Here I wish to illustrate the ways in which my sample of self-defined gay men present themselves to others in the workplace. In particular, I aim to answer two of my key research questions, namely:

- How important is their sexuality in their working lives in defining who they are?
- What self-presentation strategies do gay men use in managing their identity in the workplace?

In this chapter, I aim to develop and contribute towards the growing body of work around the issue of disclosure/non-disclosure of sexuality and the self-presentation strategies that gay men use in managing potentially discreditable information about themselves. The management of one's social identity Goffman refers to as the 'Presentation of self' (1959) as discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3. In this seminal piece of work Goffman uses metaphors from the stage; the backstage and the front stage. The backstage aspect to identity is where the individual feels he can be his true self, whereas the front stage is where individuals feel they need to adapt or modify their presentation of self for public consumption. The presentation of self could be defined as like putting on a show in which individuals attempt to present themselves in the way that they wish to be perceived by others. Goffman's theory of presentation of self is particularly salient for potentially invisible identities such as sexuality, especially given the potential stigma others might attach to a gay identity. This Chapter aims to explore the various strategies deployed by my sample of self-defined gay men in how they presented themselves to others in the workplace. The following sub themes in the presentation of self will be covered; downplaying a gay identity, emphasising a professional identity, issue of competency and the separation of work and private life. There has been scant previous research on the reflective processes involved in identity management in relation to gay men. This chapter aims to contribute to previous literature on gay identity management by exploring how gay men have adapted or modified their presentation of self depending on social context. Goffman argues if the presentation of self is not deemed credible or if the 'actor'

misrepresents himself where the ‘mask slips on the front stage’, then the possible consequences are *‘immediate humiliation and sometimes permanent loss of reputation.’* (1959:59). Unpacking Goffman’s concept of ‘the mask’, I aim to explore how ‘the mask’ is used as a tool to convey the self we would like to be or are striving towards. This chapter aims to draw upon different situations and environments where gay men have modified or adapted their presentation of self in light of the reaction of others throughout their working lives. This chapter will draw examples from respondents where they have changed their presentation of self from one occupation to the next.

The following themes extracted from the interviews will be analysed in relation to the internal dimension of identity:

- (i) The importance of a gay identity and the presentation of self
- (ii) Political, active and passive identities
- (iii) The timing and manner: revealing discreditable information
- (iv) Playing up to stereotypes and the use of humour

6.2. The importance of a gay identity and the presentation of self.

We all have multiple identities in our lives. We may define ourselves by a whole number of factors such as our occupation, our relationships, our leisure pursuits, our race, our gender. As Bradley (1996:23) argues people take their sense of identities from a number of different sources; including age, sexuality, gender and consumption patterns. The focus of this theme is to explore how important a component my sample of gay men felt their sexuality was in how they defined themselves. I aim to explore whether they saw their gay identity as a dominant identity. I will first explore the level of importance my respondents attached to their gay identity in how they saw themselves. Linked with this is an investigation into the self presentation approaches my respondents deployed in presenting their gay identity to others. These approaches included downplaying their

sexuality, separating their gay identity from their working lives and emphasising their professional identity.

One of my key aims was to explore the extent to which gay men attach importance or make a deliberate choice to bring to the fore their gay identity in their presentation of self. The closest concept that has touched on this issue is Brekhus's (2003) work on identity construction. Brekhus' (2003) research explored the self-presentation strategies deployed by 30 self-defined gay suburban New Yorkers. He noted, taking Goffman's concept of 'the presentation of self', how some respondents perceived their 'gayness' as the most salient aspect of their lives as displayed in their presentation of self. Brekhus devised a typology of three strategies around which gay men organise their identity; namely *lifestylers*, *commuters* and *integrators*. These typologies are based around the proportion of time individuals display an openly gay identity, and how concentrated it is at different times. These typologies are used as ideal types as a descriptor of their self-presentation strategies. More than half of the respondents in my sample saw their gay identity as a significant factor in how they defined themselves. Ben, 44, deputy ward manager of a health care trust, like the majority of respondents, felt his sexuality was a very important facet of his identity make-up. However, his presentation of self was atypical in that he consciously made his gay identity a dominant one. Ben actively did this not only in his outward appearance wearing gay insignia such as rainbow neck pieces, badges including the adoption of a gay clone skinhead look, bomber jacket and Dr Martin boots, but also deliberately making his sexuality known to others as soon as introductions were made. Given the presumption of heterosexuality, he chose to divulge his sexuality in order to avoid any ambiguity or misunderstanding.

Ben: *From day one, if I've ever changed wards or changed environments, the first thing I say is, 'I'm Ben. I'm gay.'*

SR: *Is that how you introduce yourself?*

Ben: *Yeah! I don't think it's a problem. 'Out', loud and proud! If they don't like it, it will be their problem.* Ben, 44, deputy ward manager.

Brekhus would define respondents such as Ben as *lifestylers*. For gay *lifestylers* their sexuality is the key defining feature of who they are. Here what he wears, consumes, eats,

whom he meets is informed by his sexuality. According to Brekhus (2003:36), the gay *lifestyler* is the most visible and easily recognised by the wider public as they follow a gay template represented in popular culture. Brekhus uses the analogy of a peacock in how the gay *lifestyler* presents his gay identity. The marked or stigmatised identity is accentuated and proudly put on display as a master status. Any negative value attached by others to a gay identity is inverted into a positive one and displayed as a badge of pride. Ben would seem to fit close to this typology in his presentation of self. Brekhus makes the assumption that individuals can choose the degree to which they can present their gay identity. In Ben's case, social contextual factors were significant contributing factors making it much easier for him to adopt a *lifestyler* strategy. There was a numerically large visible gay presence in his organisation with an established LGBT network within the union. All were contributing factors that facilitated the construction, in Ben's case, of a visible, dominant, outward display of his gay identity in his presentation of self. In fact, Brekhus recognises this in one of his very few references to work context where he (2003:132) theoretically argues that *lifestylers cluster in occupations with unusually large numbers of gay men*. Although Brekhus' typologies are a useful descriptor in applying Goffman's presentation of self to gay identities and draw attention to the possible alternative strategies that gay men might adopt, the typologies are however rather one dimensional. Brekhus does not clearly explain the term identity nor does he explain how such identities are negotiated. Although Brekhus makes passing reference to social context in the shaping of identities, he does not explore this in any depth. Even though Brekhus, through observation, notices the different typologies his respondents adopted, he does not explain how they 'chose' such strategies. Implicit in his work is a disregard to the social context and in particular the working environment that individuals find themselves in. Brekhus explores social context solely on the basis of location, whether one lives in the suburbs or in the centre of a metropolis. My findings would seem to suggest that adopting a *lifestyler* strategy is only open to those who have multiple opportunities that allow them the freedom of choice to do so. This is something that is neglected in Brekhus' theoretical framework. A *lifestyler* strategy is not just a question of location, but also dependent on the work context.

Like Ben, Dale, 36, a receptionist for a leisure complex, recognised the importance of his sexuality in how he defined himself. However, unlike Ben, he did not display it as a badge of pride. Dale felt however 'good' his presentation of self was, using Goffman's metaphor, the mask would slip and others would perceive him and define him as gay.

'The trouble is you see, I am probably a bit of a stereotype and I don't consciously mean to be. I don't set out to be this way, but everything is this massive screaming gay response and I don't mean it to be, but it's just the way it is. So I would say that my sexuality defines me in who I am as a person. And I am not proud of that fact.' Dale, 36, receptionist for a leisure complex.

In Dale's case, the importance attached to his gay identity had primarily been ascribed by others. Since he felt others viewed his gay identity as a key marked identity, on reflection, he felt he should give it the same level of importance. Dale's experience would seem to concur with Phellas' (1998) findings in his research on gay Greek-Cypriots in the U.K. where individuals who reveal a visible gay identity became identified primarily in terms of their sexual identity. Dale, in many respects seemed to consent to what Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) conceptualised as hegemonic masculinity in which a particular variety of masculinity is idealised where other forms such as effeminate as well as gay men are subordinated. Dale seemed to comply with the meanings ascribed by others attached to his gay identity, internalising them as something he was ashamed of. He was consciously aware of his difference in how he portrayed a particular form of masculinity. This is in contrast to Ben who had actively constructed a dominant gay identity as a positive attribute in a direct challenge to hegemonic masculinity.

In a similar vein to Dale, Stan, 35, a primary school deputy head, was very conscious of his sexuality. He recognised its importance in how he defined himself. Nevertheless, he tried to play down this aspect of his identity in his presentation of self as internally Stan perceived his sexuality as a misfortune.

'I think I probably try and play it down.....I've always felt it feels like the second best option in life in a way and I think that there's a little bit of, still after all these years, what a shame it had to happen to me.' Stan, 35, deputy head of a primary school.

A few respondents reflected how the level of importance they attached to their gay identity depended upon changing social contexts. Phil, 31, for example, felt that its importance had waned over the years. During his teenage years he had attached greater significance to his gay identity primarily because of the negative reactions of others around him had made fun of his sexuality. This was in stark contrast to Callum, 29, who felt that his sexuality had become a much more important facet in how he defined himself due to the fact that he had recently entered into a civil partnership. For Callum, it was a positive experience that had raised the importance he attached to his sexuality. Such findings would seem to suggest that Bradley's (1996:25) theoretical concepts of active and passive identities might need developing to include the impact of positive events. According to Bradley, identities tend to become active *when an individual is conscious of being defined in a negative way*. In Callum's case this is not always true. (Bradley's theoretical concepts will be explored in more depth in the final theme under the theme of political identities.)

A minority of respondents felt different from their heterosexual counterparts because of their sexuality. Nigel, 29, for example, felt that because he had not followed the same life path as many of his contemporaries at his age such as starting a family that he was in some way more immature. Likewise, Pat, a senior lawyer within his practice felt he did not *fit in* with the other directors. Pat believed that since a lot of networking and social events were based around male dominated sports such as rugby and golf he came to the conclusion that this only highlighted his difference because of his sexuality. This is probably due to the fact that sport symbolises hegemonic (heterosexual) masculinity. Nevertheless, some respondents expressed a contrasting opinion. For Malcolm, 45, a PCV driving instructor and Robert, 46, a financial manager, the fact that there was a strong visible gay presence in their workplaces eliminated any feelings of difference. It would seem from my findings that workplace setting was a significant factor in determining whether they perceived themselves as different from their heterosexual work colleagues. This difference was primarily based around the way they performed masculinity.

Nevertheless, nearly a quarter of the respondents had a heightened sense of awareness of their gay identity in the workplace. Such sensitivity centred round the form of masculinity they presented to others. Some respondents would try to deepen the tone of their voice or dress conservatively in order to hide a potentially discreditable identity. Nigel, Pablo and Stan, who were all teachers, expressed how they felt they had to play down their gay identity in their occupation particularly where their presentation of self would be under close scrutiny. They did this, I would argue, in order to fit into the social expectations of how a teacher should perform.

'When I go for interviews I would be very conscious about the way I sat or the way I spoke, the way I shook somebody's hand.....to try and behave in a slightly different way.' Stan, 35, deputy head of a primary school.

Pablo reflected how he sometimes performed a particular form of masculinity in front of his pupils in his presentation of self around the school.

'Sometimes you need to butch it up actually.....especially with the boys, not to be too delicate or too camp with them so that you earn their respect.' Pablo, 31, primary school teacher.

I would argue that Pablo was constrained in the way he presented his form of masculinity in the classroom. He had to 'butch it up' in order to maintain discipline and authority, the implication being that performing non normative forms of masculinity might lead to questions being raised around one's effectiveness as a teacher. As Pablo argues, he felt he needed to 'butch it up' in order to gain the respect of his male pupils, otherwise his presentation of self might be discredited. Collinson and Hearn (1994) identify five forms of masculinity pervasive in managerial discourses and practices. They associate authoritarianism with a particular form of masculinity based on aggressiveness. They theoretically argue that those who use authoritarianism do so to heighten their masculinity. It could therefore be the case that gay men might feel they have to enact this form of masculinity in order to make their authority seem credible in the eyes of others. My findings revealed that those in positions of authority were under greater pressure in how they presented a gay identity. For example, Dean, in probably the most symbolic of all authoritative occupations working as an openly gay lesbian and gay liaison police

officer (LAGLO) felt he had to be more guarded in how he presented himself in front of the general public whilst out on the beat.

'I think for me the biggest worry would be members of the public picking up on my sexuality.... I think I'm more guarded. Yeah, when I'm out I'm a police officer first and that's my role and that's my uniform. I have to be that professional image. I don't want to give anything to anyone that they could use to get an advantage over me. You have to be able to know that I can control the situation and if needs be control the person and perhaps arrest them.' Dean, Police officer.

Interestingly Dean uses the words 'control' and 'get an advantage over'. The key theme here is the issue of power and authority. He feels that his authority would be undermined or questioned if his gay identity became visible. Dean's sentiments reflect Goffman's concept of discreditable identities in his work on Stigmas (1968). I would argue that Dean fears that any possible visibility of his gay identity might discredit his identity as a police officer and undermine his authority thus leaving him vulnerable.

Godfrey, in a similar authoritarian role as an environmental health inspector would try to tone down any camp behaviour when inspecting catering and hotel premises. The underlying assumption expressed by these respondents is that non normative forms of masculinity or 'camp' behaviour are incongruous with authority roles. Rumens and Kerfoot (2009:769) note that there is a dearth of research on how gay men construct professional identities using their bodies. My findings seek to fill this gap, shedding light on the dilemmas of presenting a gay identity with the socially expected role of being a professional. In another example, Pat, a lawyer would be very conscious in how he presented himself when he had to represent a client.

'I would try and keep my voice down or dress conservatively. I have a pink tie, for example, and when I wear it I'm conscious that it's somehow shouting that I'm gay or whatever, but I do wear it, but not that frequently.' Pat, 52, lawyer, not 'out' at work.

For these respondents, the level of agency is restricted in how they present their gay identity. In the above examples, they would try and put on a mask by trying to cover their perceived discreditable identity. These approaches seem to resonate with Ward's (2008:59) findings where he notes how we are expected to conform in how we use our

bodies to present outward traits of masculinity. In all these examples outlined above, using Goffman's metaphor of the stage, once on the stage, they felt they had to perform a particular form of masculinity expected within their respective organisations. In a similar vein, Conklin (2004) reports the story of a gay white man who divulges the day-to-day challenges of managing a gay identity at work in which he tries to appear more masculine and adopt heterosexual male behaviours. Rofes (2000) a university lecturer in San Francisco equally felt constrained in the way he enacted masculinity.

'At various times in my college teaching career I have become almost paralysed with uncertainty about what to wear, how to speak, how to walk, how to sit, how to move. I neurotically obsess on these questions or repress them fully.' Rofes (2000:449-50)

Like my respondents who worked in the teaching profession, Rofes felt he had to sacrifice parts of his gay identity in order to fit into the behaviour and conduct expected of a teacher. As Rumens and Kerfoot (2009:765) observe in their research on gay professional men, even in so called 'gay friendly' organisations gay men are affected *by dominant professional norms and discourses of heteronormativity that treat sexuality and professionalism as polar opposites*. My work although drawing parallels with Rumens and Kerfoot's findings, highlights the contradictory roles of authority and non normative displays of masculinity missing in their research. Rumens and Kerfoot's work focuses on gay men and professional identities whereas my findings add to this by uncovering the dilemmas of presenting a gay identity in positions that require the exercise of authority.

6.2.1. Downplaying sexuality

Although the majority of respondents attached importance to their sexuality in how they defined themselves, they nevertheless tried to downplay its significance. Godfrey, for example, did not want others to view him solely through his sexuality.

'They've [work colleagues] had enough of the gayness, you know and I don't want to keep going on. It's like a one trick pony. God, all you can talk about is being gay. Is there anything else more to your life than being gay? Is all you do is watch gay programmes, go to gay venues, meet gay people? Are you just a complete gay? You know, you live in a complete gay life and everything is a

vacuum to you. And I'm thinking. No, I'm not. I don't identify myself as being just gay. I'm more than that. I'm me whatever that is.' Godfrey, 47, Environmental health officer. 'Out' in present occupation.

Although Godfrey recognised the importance he personally attached to his sexuality in defining who he was he did not want this portrayed in how he presented himself to others at work. Fearing that his work colleagues would identify him primarily through his sexuality Godfrey would downplay his sexuality and emphasise other aspects of his identity. Mike, 35, who worked in a multinational bank, expressed similar feelings in how he wished to present himself to others in the workplace.

'I don't want to sort of end up like Daffyd, you know, 'Little Britain'⁶, I'm the only gay in the village, gay this, gay that, that's not me.'

Likewise Callum, 29, a regional bank manager, would try and play down his sexuality and emphasise other aspects of his identity such as his interest in football and other leisure pursuits in order to normalise his gay identity in the presence of work colleagues. All three of these respondents feared being cast as one dimensional – nothing other than gay. They illustrate the multi-dimensional nature of identities. They are comfortable being gay but do not want this to be presented as the sum total of who or what they are. For those who were not openly gay in the workplace it was not just a question of downplaying a gay identity but adopting strategies to conceal it. Roy, an engineer, in response to working in a macho male-dominated environment, where displays of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity were an everyday occurrence, demonstrated through the daily banter around the themes of women, football and alcohol consumption compounded with posters of 'page three' pin-ups attached to the factory walls, for example, used his age ,47, to mask his sexual identity. Given that the majority of his work colleagues were significantly younger than him, they assumed that his discomfort and reluctance to join in with the banter were due to his old fashioned values and his age. Consequently, Roy masks his gay identity by proactively promoting his age as a reason for his difference. In this example, the organisational context made it increasingly

⁶ **Little Britain** is an award winning character-based comedy sketch show first appearing on BBC radio and then television. It was written by Matt Lucas and David Walliams 2003-2007.

difficult for Roy to be open about his sexuality. Roy chose to conceal his gay identity as he did not want to be ridiculed by his co-workers.

Another strategy deployed by Clive, 51, site manager of a primary school, in order to hide his gay identity and to discourage searching questions, was to play the role of 'confirmed bachelor'. Clive believed that this identity would prevent his gay identity coming to the fore. Clive described the composition of the staff of being principally in the upper age bracket with traditional conservative values making it difficult for him to be more open about his sexuality.

In Peter's case, he used the cloak of his occupation to hide his gay identity.

'I do think that because of the environment I work in, the job that I do because there aren't, you know, there aren't hundreds of openly gay electricians that I know of. That kind of also, I think that kind of masks it a little bit. A lot of people, they don't see that occupation with someone who is gay.' Peter, 35, electrician, Bournemouth Borough Council.

In blue collar work such as Peter's as an electrician a certain form of masculinity is associated with the occupation. Interestingly, out of the seven respondents in my sample who worked in blue collar jobs six of them defined themselves as not being 'out' in the workplace. This reflects similar findings covered by Colgan et al (2009) in their survey of LGB public sector workers in the U.K. They discovered that respondents who worked in manual-labour male-dominated workplaces found it significantly harder to disclose their sexuality to work colleagues.

6.3. Perceiving sexuality as a private concern: Separating private and work life.

Even though the majority of my sample of gay men attached great importance to their gay identity for their self-concept, more than a quarter of respondents felt that their sexuality was a private issue that should not enter the work domain. This was irrespective of whether they had made their sexuality known to some of their work colleagues or not. Many felt that workplaces should be sexually free zones, and that they should leave their sexuality at home. A typical response (10 respondents) was that sexuality was a private

issue that should not be the concern of others. It would seem that respondents were complying with the dominant assumption as argued by Burrell and Hearn (1989) that within organisations, sexuality is deemed not important or perceived as a private concern whereas I would argue, in line with Hearn and Burrell (1989) that organisations are very much sexualised structures. The gay man's sexuality is deemed as a private individual matter in contrast to his heterosexual counterpart. Woods and Lucas (1993:22) add to this debate by arguing that organisations are profoundly sexual places. Sexuality is displayed continuously or conveyed in terms of dress, through humour, flirtations and in our self-presentations. Humphrey (1999:139) in her research of the experiences of lesbian and gay men in public service occupations adds to this standpoint by noting the contradiction where on the one hand it may increasingly be acceptable to be gay in the workplace, but on the other hand sexuality is still perceived as located within the private domain. Similar findings were uncovered in previous research, (Woods and Lucas 1993; Shallenberger 1994; Williams et al 2009), where they noted that gay men tried to make a clear distinction between their private life and their working life. Isaac was typical of these sentiments:

'My work is completely separate to my private life, so it doesn't matter what I am and I don't need to be seen to be something that isn't going to affect the work that I do.' Isaac, 41, senior financial manager, 'out' in present occupation.

The separation of work and sexuality was a recurrent theme particularly from those in male dominated workplaces (Peter an electrician, Pat a lawyer, Roland a property surveyor). Roy, 47, an electronic technician working on an all male factory floor made a conscious effort to keep the two apart.

'I keep it separate. When I'm at work I do work things and when I'm at home I do home things and that's it.' Roy, 47, electronic technician

In a similar vein, Roland, 63, a property project surveyor in a male dominated building industry would divide his private life and his work life.

'I just refuse to discuss my private life at work because I find I just don't want that distraction. You know, getting in the way of my work.' Roland, 63, property project surveyor.

For some respondents the separation of private life and work life meant that they isolated themselves from work colleagues. Those who were not 'out' to anyone in the workplace such as Daniel, 38 and Roy, 47, in order to hide their gay identity would avoid socialising with co-workers outside the workplace so that the two worlds would not collide. Roy, who worked in an environment which he described as having a *laddish* culture, would curtail meetings with work colleagues before intrusive questions were raised about his sexuality.

'I generally come away quite early because it just starts then into the drinking theme and they just have one after another. I don't want to be there to fuel anything that may happen....their tongues get a bit looser. They say what they feel and I don't want it coming out about me.' Roy, 47, electrical technician, not 'out' in present organisation.

Even those who had made their gay identity known to others in the workplace would occasionally isolate themselves from participating in social events and possible networking opportunities. Robert and Neal, for example, would refrain from socialising outside work as they felt uncomfortable or did not feel as if they fitted in. Robert explained why he had not been to his office Christmas party for nearly 20 years:

'It's probably being gay. I didn't feel included I suppose really. I didn't feel as though there was anything there for me because predominately there are going to be straights who are going to be flirting or getting off with each other when I would have preferred to have just gone into town and gone to a gay bar.' Robert, 46, financial manager, 'out' in present organisation.

In the examples illustrated by Robert and Neal, even though they had perceived themselves as being 'out' in the workplace, they still did not feel comfortable participating in the social life of their organisations. Their work environments did not seem sufficiently inclusive enough for them to want to join in.

6.4. Emphasising a professional identity

In line with previous research (Shallenberger 1994; Woods and Lucas 1993; Rumens and Kerfoot 2009), some respondents would emphasise their professional identity over their

gay identity in their self presentation strategies. A sentiment raised by some respondents (seven) was that a gay identity was incongruous with a professional one. Probably unsurprisingly such sentiments were only raised by those in white collar professional occupations. Nigel, 29, for example, made a conscious decision to present a more professional image when he entered the teaching profession particularly when he took on managerial responsibilities. He decided to play down his sexuality, carefully monitoring his own behaviour.

Nigel: *I do believe as a teacher you do, something that goes with the salary, is the fact that you've got to actually monitor your own behaviour. It's one of the few professions left where you have got to be morally superior to everyone....Each [job] move I've definitely played it [my sexuality] down more.*

SR: Why are you trying to play down your sexuality?

Nigel: *Because it's not a professional image. In my opinion, it's not a professional image in meetings with colleagues. It's not a professional image in and around the school.*

Nigel's story draws parallels with Rumens and Kerfoot (2009) and Humphrey's (1999) findings where they found that gays and lesbians had to compromise the way they managed their gay identity. Nigel, in the above quote, justifies why he needs to downplay his sexuality as his role as a teacher requires him to be 'morally superior.' Here he implies that he cannot be morally superior if his pupils or parents know he is gay. Woods and Lucas (1993) also noted the constraints that professional gay men experience in constructing a sense of identity in relation to their sexuality. A large number of men in Woods and Lucas's sample felt it was 'unprofessional' to disclose their sexuality to their work colleagues. Nigel's story also illustrates the way in which self-presentation strategies evolve and adapt over time depending on the social context (see Table 6). In Nigel's previous occupation within the catering and hospitality industry he felt he could be less guarded in how he presented his potentially discreditable identity. Nigel would 'camp it up' and play to banter with his co-workers. Likewise, Roland, a property surveyor who regularly worked on building sites, would deliberately craft his self-presentation around professionalism.

'They don't know who I am or what I am. They just take me. I am the project. I am the contract administrator or the person who is running the job. I've got the

badge on. I've got the hat on. It's a professional person and that's the persona I like to have at work. I try and keep totally professional in my job...I think I am looked on as a professional person. At work I'm treated totally as a professional. I am respected as a professional person and that's how I want it. I am who I am, you know. I'm running that project and it has taken me years to get to that point and I jealously guard that position. So I don't want it undermined by them having a reason to think that I was a poof, you know. ' Roland, 63, project property surveyor.

In the above quote, Roland expresses an element of self-loathing. He expresses disgust at the thought that others might see him as 'a poof'. He therefore uses the props of his protective helmet and his badge as a means of projecting a professional identity in order to disguise his gay identity. The uniform he wears on the building sites acts as form of mask to hide his sexual orientation. These findings resonate with previous research (Holliday 1999, Ward and Winstanley, 2006) where it was noted that the wearing of uniforms not only reduces outward difference but may also enhance status and respect from work colleagues. Interestingly like Nigel, Roland reflected upon how his presentation of self had changed depending on work context. In his previous occupation in the hotel trade he felt that putting to the fore a professional identity was not so necessary and thus he felt he could allow his gay identity to be more visible (see Table 6).

In a similar vein, Isaac, 41, a senior financial manager expressed how he put on a professional identity when he entered the workplace de-emphasising his gay identity.

'From a work perspective I've always put my work hat on above my [gay] identity hat. So my view is I do a very good job. I get things done. People look at me as someone who gets things done and so you know, I have a reputation in the bank amongst people for that and I suppose my view of myself is that's what I am first and foremost in the workplace. The fact that I happen to live with a guy is kind of second to almost non important to all that. ' Isaac, 41, senior financial manager.

Interestingly Isaac defines himself around his competency in his job. It is this aspect that Isaac wishes others to judge and perceive him for rather than his sexuality. This links to the next self presentation strategy, based upon the issue of competence.

6.5. Issue of competence

Closely connected to the issue of presenting a professional image in the presentation of self, a concern raised by a few of those in senior management positions was that they felt they had to prove themselves as competent professionals in order to compensate for their potentially discreditable identity. Nigel, a secondary school teacher with management responsibilities felt the fact that he was an effective teacher proven through excellent student exam results and good classroom skills meant that he had built up enough kudos to compensate for the potential stigma surrounding his sexuality. Similarly, Stefan, working in a male dominated environment as a senior manager in the haulage industry felt he had to work harder to prove his effectiveness.

'I've had to work hard to get here to where I am at the moment....It would just seem easier [being heterosexual] cos you then don't have all the hurdles of some people not liking you because you're gay and things like that.' Stefan, 40, senior logistics manager.

Likewise, Ivan, 43, senior manager brought in as a trouble shooter for a poor performing glass making factory felt that he had to work harder to convince his subordinates that he was an effective manager partly to compensate for his sexuality. Similar findings were uncovered in Shallenberg's (1994) research of openly gay professional in the U.S. Shallenberger discovered that there was a perceived need to overachieve to demonstrate competency in order to prevent any potential discrimination. Finally, a respondent in Woods and Lucas' (1993:210) research drew striking similarities with the sentiments that Pat, 52, a director of a legal practice held. Pat repeatedly used the phrase that he needed *to bring things to the table* in order to compensate for his sexuality. Similarly, Carter, a respondent in Woods and Lucas' findings felt a need to overachieve in order to be himself.

'The more I bring to the hotel the more I do for the hotel and do for my clients, the more I can be myself.' Woods and Lucas (1993:210)

6.6. Political, active and passive identities

Within this theme, I wish to explore the degree to which my sample of self-defined gay men took on an active or political identity in their presentations of self to others in the workplace. According to Bradley (1996:25), active identities are defined as those that we are consciously aware of and form a basis for action, though this does not necessarily mean that we are constantly thinking of ourselves in terms of any single identity. Nevertheless, according to Bradley, identities may become active because of some negative trigger such as the experience of discrimination. Although as discussed earlier in this chapter, this is not always the case. A positive event can make an identity active. Even so, three of the respondents in my sample seemed to follow Bradley's concept of active and political identities. They took on a political identity because of negative experiences they had personally confronted in their lives. Nigel, 29, for example, became the local union representative for his secondary school primarily because he felt there were a number of issues within the school that needed dealing with including the reporting of homophobic incidents towards both students and teachers. Nigel campaigned with the support of the deputy head, who was also openly gay, to implement an anti-homophobia policy in line with other diversity strands. Similarly, Dean, 42, decided to become a lesbian and gay liaison officer (LAGLO) for his police constabulary as well as a diversity champion, sitting on the local equality action group because of the struggles and hurt he had faced from the reactions of others to his sexuality throughout his life. Another example was Jack, 34 who also took on a political identity in actively co-founding a Pride march in response to an evangelical Christian organisation that had decided to organise a rally against homosexuality. Jack recalled how he had decided to get involved in setting up a Pride march after he had witnessed verbal homophobic abuse coming from a member of the above mentioned evangelical group as he was coming out of a gay café. Jack, who was the owner of a gay lifestyle shop, used his store as a centre to mount a campaign against the Christian movement. Such stories seem to resonate with Woods and Lucas' research (1993) where some respondents felt that they had little choice but to be political in the face of negative reactions of others. Supporting Bradley's concept of political identities Woods and Lucas (1993:195) noted how some gay men in

their study politicised their identity *motivated by a particular grievance, a discriminatory policy or practice they wanted to change.*

Around a quarter of respondents (11), on the other hand, no longer saw themselves as taking on a political identity in the ways in which they presented themselves. Hans, an EFL teacher, 59, for example, recalled how he used to adopt a political stance in the 1970s, but now no longer feels he has the fight in him. Hans would wear a lavender badge, a political symbol for gay equality, in the classroom as an overt political statement. Hans would justify his wearing of the badge to the director of the school, who demanded that he take it off. Hans protested to his director that some of the women teachers were wearing badges in the name of women's liberation and thus he felt it legitimised his own actions. Nevertheless, in later years, Hans no longer adopts a political identity as he feels many of the battles have been won.

'There was a rebellious quality in me then to fight and don't forget in those days gayness was not accepted like it is today. It was something you did have to fight for. Today, it's a normal thing. [Today] I think I would 'come out' in a far more mature way. I wouldn't wear a badge. I wouldn't force it down other people's throats and force it into their faces.' Hans, 59, EFL teacher, 'out' in present organisation.

This seemed to be a common pattern amongst the older respondents in my sample, where they had identified themselves collectively as a political movement fighting for equality in the 1970s and 1980s. Such political identification seemed to wane amongst this age group, probably because they had experienced a dramatic shift in social attitudes combined with changes in the law towards homosexuality in their lifetimes. A good example of this was Ronald's life story (aged 63), where he recounted how he had opened a gay bed & breakfast establishment in the 1970s against both legal and local resistance. Roland challenged the local council in revoking his licence. He went on Pride marches and fund raising events. Today, in his present occupation, a property project surveyor, he no longer adopts a political identity, even though he cited a number of examples of homophobic bullying within the organisation he currently works at. Roland,

however, has lost the will to fight nor does he have any desire to join the council's LGBT group. He has also decided not to disclose his gay identity to others in the workplace.

'I have taken the path of least resistance now. I just want to see my time out at work, retire and then come home and be myself and be openly gay cos I am openly gay here [at home].' Roland, 63, property project surveyor, not 'out' in present organisation.

Simon, 42, a senior managing director of a leading retail chain, similarly recognised how in his younger days he was more political whereas today he no longer feels at a disadvantage or believes that taking on a political identity is required any longer. In the 1980s, Simon recalled how he was more political in response to the negative reactions of others.

'There was a reason to be then because there was discrimination and there were a lot of gay bashings in London at the time. There was an unequal age of consent and there was the whole AIDS thing which in those days was a very big issue. So there were lots of things to get political about. I'm not sure that there are many issues to get political about nowadays.' Simon, 42, senior managing director, 'out' in present organisation.

More than half the respondents (30) did not perceive a need to present a political identity in the workplace. A repeated theme from a large number in my sample was that there were no longer issues surrounding being openly gay in the workplace. Pablo, 31, believed that gay men had now achieved equality and consequently there was no need to adopt a political identity. Equally, Dale, 36, felt that there was no need to join the LGBT network set up by the council as there were no issues to address.

'I mean, what's there to say? Perhaps back in the day people did have issues. Like what's the point? What would be the meeting for?' Dale, 36, receptionist/assistant operations manager, 'out' in present organisation.

In Dale's case, it would seem that Dale's gay identity fits closely to what Bradley (1996:24) terms 'passive identities'. This is where an identity is not acted upon or does not form a basis for action. Other respondents such as Jenson, 40, did not identify themselves around their sexuality. Jenson saw gay political activism as quite alien to how he presented himself to others. He felt any political activism, such as the wearing of

rainbow badges (a symbol of gay equality) was a form of fundamentalism. For Jenson, his sexuality was not a significant part of his identity that needed to be acted upon.

'I think that's [wearing gay equality symbols] slightly fundamentalist. I think that's making an issue of the situation when I don't think there's an issue anymore.....It's making more of my sexuality than I actually feel. That isn't who I am. I'm me. I'm the person I am. My sexuality is just part of that. So why do I want to identify myself as my sexuality? It's just a small part of me.' Jenson, 40, finance processing manager, 'out' in present organisation.

In a similar vein to Dale, Jenson seems to concur with Bradley's concept of 'passive identities' in relation to his gay identity. For Jenson, he is not particularly conscious of his gay identity on a day-to-day basis nor does he define himself as such.

Even so, some respondents such as Neal, 27, expressed their frustration and anger at gay men who felt that equality had been achieved. Neal argued that there was still a need for an LGBT network in his organisation, citing examples of discrimination in the wider community. It was primarily for this reason why Neal decided to become actively involved in his organisation's LGBT network as chairperson. Neal also took on the role of mobilising collectively. Neal perceived his sexuality as a collective identity that needed to be actively mobilised.

'I'm gay, for me it was like, he's gay, what's his name? He's not on the LGBT membership list. Why is this? I have this big thing about you know, if I meet somebody who is 'out' who works at 'X' I want to know why they aren't a member of the LGBT group, because I wanted everyone to be a member.' Neal, 27, senior operations supervisor, 'out' in present organisation.

I would argue that Neal became more politically active campaigning for equality primarily because his organisation actively supported and encouraged the establishment of a company LGBT network. The company had also won diversity awards from Stonewall because of its commitment to gay equality. This contrasts with his previous workplace, working in a local convenience store where he had not actively championed gay equality issues within his workplace even though he had suffered homophobic abuse (see Table 6).

There was also a cluster of respondents (nine) who were actively involved in either an LGBT network within the organisation they worked at or were part of the LGBT body within their trade union. Ben, 44, for example, who was the LGBT regional officer in a public sector union, UNISON, was probably the most strident in trying to mobilise collectively. He would give out ID badges attached with a rainbow ribbon neck piece with the words 'Out in UNISON' emblazoned around it. He would wear this gay identity tag with pride and encourage other gay, lesbian and bisexual colleagues do so as well. Throughout the interview he would repeat the phrase '*out and proud*'. What is probably surprising was that although he saw his role as an LGBT champion fighting to stamp out any forms of discrimination and to give a voice to those who are not heard, he did not see his role as being a political one. Ben seemed to separate gay equality activism from political activism, even though conceptually his actions and motivations were in effect political.

'No, politics does not really come into it. Like I say, it's just equality. People suffered to get to where we are today and like I say, we should go out there and embrace it.' Ben, 44, deputy ward manager for health care trust, 'out' in present organisation.

Probably because campaigning for gay equality and gay rights no longer seems as controversial as in the past, Ben does not perceive his actions as being political. Yet, Ben was striving to create a collective gay identity through giving out 'Out in UNISON' neck pieces and encouraging LGBT employees to join the LGBT wing of UNISON. This seems to be in stark contrast with Dankmeijer's research (1993) on gay and lesbian teachers in the Netherlands. In his fieldwork, done in 1986, he noted how the teachers in his sample took on the role of crusaders for gay liberation. According to Dankmeijer, his respondents actively presented themselves as political warriors in their fight to express their sexuality. One such strategy was the wearing of badges identifying their sexuality. Of course the political and social context in 1980s is vastly different to today. Many of the struggles that Dutch gay men had been fighting for have been won. Nevertheless, Dankmeijer's Dutch respondents, unlike my sample of gay men, recognised that what they were doing was a political struggle for gay rights in the workplace. Griffin (1991)

also noted in a study of gay and lesbian educators that some respondents wore gay-identified symbols such as badges and pink triangles as a means of making a statement about their identity. Ben's actions could arguably be interpreted as making a strong identity statement, even though he does not perceive it as being political. Given that campaigns for gay equality have in recent years become more mainstream in the media, it could be argued that the issue has become less contentious. It is probably for this reason that a number of respondents did not perceive their actions as being political. George, 44, a bus driver, for example, during the interview, wore a rainbow wristband and ring, a symbol of gay equality. He did not, however, connect the wearing of such symbols of gay equality as having any political connotations. George wore these items in order to make his sexuality visible to others. It would seem in George's case, he wished to make a marked identity around his sexuality.

To some degree the depoliticising of campaigns for gay equality was reflected in how Dean saw his role as LAGLO special police constable. He interpreted a political stance as being an overt, confrontational approach in dealing with discrimination in the workplace.

'I suppose my brand is equality without the drum banging. I am political in the sense that I want to support people and I want to effect change in an organisation and I want to promote diversity. Where it happens, I want to challenge stereotyping or unfairness, but not political in that sort of I need everybody to know that I'm the gay diversity champion and you'd better watch out. I am not that politicised cos I do feel sometimes you can take an issue to a level politically that you actually have the opposite effect with people becoming so antagonised by it.' Dean, 42, force enquiry officer, LAGLO, Special constable, 'out' in present organisation.

In Dean's case he seemed to reflect on how he manages his identity as a LAGLO officer wary of the potential reactions of others he tries to downplay the political element to his role to avoid any possible backlash.

6.7. The timing and manner: revealing discreditable information.

According to Goffman (1959) in his theory ‘the presentation self’, it is the backstage (or the internal dimension) where the individual has agency in deciding how he wishes to present himself to others. Goffman argues that it is here where individuals attempt to present themselves in the way that they wish to be perceived by others. In a similar vein, Bradley (1996) argues it would be incorrect to assume that we sit passively waiting to be shaped by the processes that surround us. We do have some degree of control in determining our social identities. It is in the internal dimension of identity where we can decide how we are to present our ‘marked’ or as Goffman describes it, our ‘discredited’ identity to others. One of the ways in which gay men might wrest control over their gay identity is in the timing and manner in which this potentially discreditable information is revealed to others in the workplace.

38 out of 45 of the respondents in my sample claimed that they were ‘out’ in varying degrees in the workplace. A theme that arose from a few of these respondents (four) was how they saw the issue of how they controlled such discreditable information as a source of power. The ways in which they revealed this information was paramount. Ivan, 43, Malcolm, 45 and Simon, 42 all felt that how they revealed their sexuality to others in the workplace could be used as a source of strength. Ivan, for example, who was brought in as a trouble shooter manager, to turn around an under performing glass manufacturing company, consciously decided to reveal his sexuality to his subordinates whilst interviewing new recruits primarily as a means of combating the homophobic comments he had received from the existing staff. Ivan, saw revealing his sexuality to potential new employees as a way of wresting control and authority over his subordinates.

‘When I had interviews with staff, I told them straightaway that I’m gay. If you’ve got an issue before you start, if you want to work here, you are working for a gay man. Do you understand that? So they knew before they started....Because of the issues I’d had. They’d heard these homophobic remarks, but when somebody’s going to work for me they’re going to accept that I’m gay and I want them to know before they start there. It shouldn’t be an issue, I know, but I think at least if

they know, it can't become an issue afterwards as far as I'm concerned. It's out of the way, isn't it?' Ivan, 43, manager for a glass manufacturer.

Ivan was able to use his position as manager to great effect, taking advantage of the positional power which came with the role. He was able to disclose his gay identity in a position of strength during the selection interview. Potential employees could deselect themselves if they felt uncomfortable working for an openly gay manager. Of course, if the roles had been reversed, revealing might not have had the same impact. A candidate may have been at risk of being rejected.

Similarly, Malcolm, a bus driving instructor, would openly reveal his sexuality to co-workers in order to pre-empt any gossip. By taking the initiative, Malcolm was able, to some degree, to mould and construct his gay identity before it was created by others.

'I want them to know so they can't be thinking, is he? Isn't he? You know, having a smirk behind my back. Once they know, that's it. I have always told people so I feel I have got the upper hand. So I have stopped the gossip before it's got to that.' Malcolm, 45, PCV driving instructor.

Organisational context probably influenced Malcolm's decision to disclose. He was aware that there was a numerically large gay presence in his workplace some of whom were in senior positions. The fact that these gay employees had not suffered any apparent discrimination probably impacted on the timing of his disclosure. As King et al (2008) discovered in their research on the best/worst time to disclose a gay identity, context and a supportive workplace were by far the most important factors (as discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5).

In common with Ivan and Malcolm, Simon would deliberately be upfront about his sexuality. Simon felt that if he had tried to hide his gay identity and then later others discovered this potentially discreditable identity it would then be perceived as a sign of weakness. This seems to resonate with Goffman's (1959) presentation of self where if the 'actor' misrepresents himself or the 'mask slips on the front stage', then as Goffman argues, they chance *'immediate humiliation and sometimes permanent loss of reputation.'* (1959:59). Simon realises the possible loss of reputation particularly in his position as a

very senior manager within a leading retail chain. By being open about his sexuality Simon feels it empowers him by making the potential problem a problem that others have to deal with rather than one he has to resolve. Nevertheless, like Ivan, Simon was in a very senior position in his organisation. He believed that his seniority had influenced the way he disclosed his gay identity and how he could use his position to stamp out any discriminatory behaviour.

'I'm often one of the most important people in the room, so it would be very easy for me to stamp my authority on that [homophobic] sort of behaviour and I would!but part of my confidence probably comes from the level of my seniority and if I were younger, less senior, starting out, less confident about all of that I guess you'd behave differently.' Simon, Managing director, 'out' in this workplace.

Simon recounted his experience in the early 1990s working as a junior employee in a male dominated turf accountant chain, where he had decided not to disclose his sexuality. The social context and his subordinate position, he felt made it difficult for him to reveal.

For some respondents, however, controlling potentially discreditable information was out of their hands. Callum, 29, for example, who had just joined a retail bank as a trainee graduate entrant, recalled how he was 'outed' in his first week. Callum's branch manager decided to ask him in front of his work colleagues whether he was straight or gay. The public 'outing' by his manager was a humiliating experience. In response, Callum expressed his anger admonishing his manager's inappropriate questioning in a public setting. Fortunately for Callum, he was able to regain some control. Callum had the support from two sources, his assistant manager who helped place a grievance against the manager and the HR department. Although, Callum was in a subordinate, junior position he was fortunate to have organisational support allowing him to wrest some control back. Donald, 43, also recalled how other gardeners he worked with would occasionally publicly 'out' him in front of newcomers.

'I think sometimes perhaps other people make comments about your sexuality or make some little mini big announcement in front of people because somehow they are enhanced or they feel big doing it maybe.' Donald, 43, gardener. 'out' in present organisation.

In Don's case, the public 'outing' by others had put control in the hands of the announcer. Don felt powerless and uncomfortable in these situations as he had little control in shaping how his sexuality was revealed to others. The timing and manner in revealing potentially discreditable information in all these stories is a key component. This reflects previous research, where Ward and Winstanley (2005) noted that how you 'come out' is fundamental in defining how others react. As Alex, a warehouse stock controller, 31, explained, timing is important as he felt that he would be prejudged on stereotypes if he revealed too early before co-workers got to know him better. Nevertheless, during a 'get to know you' session at an induction training event where new recruits were put in pairs to exchange personal information about each other, Alex decided to tell his co-pair that he was gay. Alex realised his mistake in revealing such information too early. His co-pair interpreted Alex's revelation as meaning an 'out and proud gay man'. She thus stood up and introduced this information as such to the rest of the group. Alex's story illustrates how the timing can have a significant impact on how others interpret such information. In Alex's case, his understanding of his identity as 'just a man who happens to be gay' was interpreted by others as a banner waving, 'out' and proud gay man, much to Alex's irritation, simply as a result of the manner of his 'coming out'.

A theme that has had scant previous research, probably due to the recent explosion in modern technology, is the way in which some respondents used internet based social forums to intentionally or unintentionally reveal their sexuality to co-workers. For Neal, 27 and Stefan, 40, internet social forums such as 'Facebook' were an easy way of revealing without embarrassment or the need for face-to-face contact. As Neal explained; *'It kind of does the whole 'out' thing for you.'* Nevertheless, the medium can 'out' individuals unintentionally. Daniel, 38, for example, had made a conscious decision not to reveal his sexual identity to anyone at work. One day at work he decided to activate an application on his Iphone called *Grindr* (a gay dating site that locates the proximity of other users). To his horror Daniel discovered that there was another member of the site only two meters away! Daniel quickly switched off the application in fear that his gay

identity might have become known. Daniel's story illustrates the way, in Goffman's terms, the mask might slip.

From my sample of self-defined gay men, different strategies were used in how they divulged their gay identity to others in the workplace. One such approach, favoured by Isaac, 41, James, 45, Stan 35 and Sam, 56 was a 'drip, drip approach', where their potentially discreditable identity was revealed little by little over time. Stan, for example, would *give clues* to other teachers in his school which he hoped they would pick up on. Isaac, like James and Sam, felt that revealing his sexuality was something that evolved rather than something formally announced all at once.

'I didn't kind of go running into my first staff meeting saying, "Oh, by the way, I'm gay and I live with my partner." You know, it's kind of the discussions over time.' Isaac, 41, finance manager, vice president, 'out' in present organisation.

Other respondents either deliberately made their gay identity visible or perceived that it was obvious for others to see. Dec, 36, for example, would make his gay identity visible by attaching rainbow triangle stickers to his car window, as in the case of respondents who wore rainbow neck pieces and rings (discussed in relation to political identities), such displays were an active means of making their gay identity visible to others. Goffman refers to these gay insignia as *stigma symbols* making others aware of their discreditable identity marking their difference. Goffman contrasts such *stigma symbols* with what he defines as *prestige symbols* such as wedding rings predominately seen as a visible sign of heterosexuality. I would argue that my respondents are trying to de-stigmatize such symbols. George and Neal both felt that their gay identity was so evident that actually formally revealing such information was not necessary. As Neal explains:

'People usually know, unless they're blind. Just because of my interaction with people I kind of wear my heart on my sleeve I guess, so it wouldn't take much for somebody [to realise].' Neal, 27, senior operations supervisor.

Of course, as Jenkins and Goffman argue, managing a discredited or potentially discreditable identity is a process not a single event. In relation to my sample of gay men,

some respondents were 'out' to a selective few at work or as discussed above, 'drip fed' information to others before revealing themselves. Given the constant presumption of heterosexuality, the process of 'coming out' is often a repetitive action (Ward, 2008). It is never a one-off event. In every new situation and faced with new contacts the 'coming out' process has to be repeated. Consequently, gay men have to constantly manage their social identity. A compounded problem is that the individual can never be sure what the reactions of others might be. As Jenkins argues, although individuals may choose to some degree how they wish to disclose their gay identity to others, what is equally important is the reception and reaction of others to that presentation. This resonates with the sentiments of some of my respondents who expressed their concern about the reactions of others in disclosing their gay identity to others in the workplace. Don's feelings were a typical example of this.

'But there's always that initial throat gripping moment when you think, oh god, here we go again. Having to 'come out' and you know, are they going to be ok? Are they going to go quiet?' Don, 43, gardener, 'out' in present organisation.

Don's experience illustrates the way in which once the discreditable identity is revealed control is out of his hands, certainly in how that information is received. This is reflected in Don's later comments:

'It was not something I had any control of after that, which was kinda scary and also a relief, relieving at the same time.' Donald, 43, gardener.

In tandem with Donald's sentiments, was a recurrent theme drawn from those who were not 'out' to anyone at work was that of the fear and the consequences of 'coming out' to work colleagues. Once the potentially discreditable information is revealed a concern raised by some respondents was the possible negative reactions. Such fears have been revealed in previous findings (Day and Schoenrade 1997; Levine and Leonard 1984; Ragins and Cornwell 2001). Of course, these fears might be real or imaginary as DeJordy's (2008) findings in the U.S. reveal.

'Although the actual consequences are unknown while passing and may in fact be less serious or negative than anticipated, it is the anticipation that

fosters the need for vigilance and therefore the need is high even if the actual consequences turn out to be significantly less negative than anticipated. ' DeJordy (2008:515)

Roy, 47, for example, feared that his co-workers would change their behaviour and attitude towards him if his sexuality was known to them. According to Roy, divulging his gay identity would be creating a marked identity of difference. Roland, 63, feared that making his sexuality known would create a distraction. Roland was concerned that it would become a marked identity in the eyes of others which would impinge on him performing in his job effectively.

'It [my sexuality] can get in the way of your work at times. You know, I'm in charge of projects on site for upteen thousand pounds. I've got to run meetings. I've got to control people on site and people like this and I don't want there to be a stereotype image of me. I want them to see me as a professional person doing a professional job.' Roland, 63, property project surveyor, not 'out' in present organisation.

Both Roy, a technical engineer and Roland, a project surveyor, worked in male dominated workplaces. They were also unaware of other gay employees. These contextual issues may have been contributing factors that discouraged them from disclosing their gay identity for fear of negative reactions. As King et al (2008) note from their findings in the U.S., accepting climates were associated with positive reactions from others. The organisational setting Roy and Roland found themselves in might have led them to deduce that disclosing their gay identity would possibly result in negative responses from co-workers.

Similarly, Clive, 51, who works as a site manager in a primary school, decided not to reveal his gay identity to others at work for fear that others might place a label on him as a paedophile. Both Roland, who also occasionally worked on school sites and Clive raised a concern that others would make a link between homosexuality and paedophilia. Such fears reflect previous research (Griffin 1991; Ferfolja and Hopkins 2013) of lesbian and gay teachers in the U.S and Australia, where they noted that gay educators were more likely to be linked to paedophilia compared to other occupations.

Probably because of the fear of negative reactions some respondents preferred to ‘test the water’ before disclosing their gay identity. Phil, 31, who runs a night time burger bar, would try and suss his clients out by asking them which bars and clubs they had frequented before revealing his gay identity. By doing this, he hoped to find clues to their sexual identity or potential reactions to his own. Phil would adopt this strategy in order to avoid any possible confrontation with clients. Alex, 34, a fencer, when interviewing labourers, would ask potential recruits if they had any problems surrounding issues of gender and homosexuality. Alex would justify his reasoning for asking such questions as it was related to the job, stating that some of their key clients were gay. Alex felt by taking this approach he could be more open about his own sexuality at a later date, after he had employed the new recruit. Finally, Godfrey’s approach, 47, illustrates the way in which the potential reactions of others heavily influence the manner in which he chooses to reveal his gay identity to others in the workplace. These respondents would scan the work environment for clues as to the likely reactions and they then proceed accordingly. This would seem to be a self-protection strategy to insulate themselves against potentially abusive, harmful behaviour.

‘My view is when I go to a new employer let’s suss the people out first. Let’s get a feel for their attitudes, how I think they are going to react rather than jump in. Because the thing is I don’t want to go to a place, a new employer and start waving my knickers in the air and cause a bad reaction at people. There might be people who are homophobic there and it is not my intention to rub anything in their noses or to cause friction between them and me.’ Godfrey, 47, environmental health officer, ‘out’ in present organisation.

Godfrey’s case, illustrates the way in which the external dimensions of identity can significantly impact upon and shape the self presentation strategy. From the above quote, Godfrey as with the vast majority of the gay men in my sample, it would seem, had been through a process of deep reflection before they revealed their gay identity. Godfrey expresses his concern that a more forthright approach in how he revealed his gay identity might create a negative response from work colleagues. He felt a more low key approach was needed so as not to offend or cause confrontation in the workplace.

Nevertheless, a small minority of respondents (three) in my sample attempted to normalise the way in which they disclosed their gay identity to others in the workplace. They felt that they should reveal their sexuality in a matter-of-fact way as if such revelations were no different to revealing a heterosexual identity. Louis, 32, who worked in retail and James, 45, a university administrator, for example, would disclose their sexuality in everyday conversation when discussing partners.

'I just talked about my life as if like anyone else would talk about their lives. So I was never 'in'. So I couldn't 'come out' because I was already 'out'. When they talk about living with a partner or whatever, I talk about my partner, ex-partner at the time.' James, 45, administrator.

Again workplace context probably played a part in the manner in which James chose to disclose his gay identity. He worked in an office with predominately female colleagues. There was also a university LGBT group which he had belonged to. These factors might have influenced his decision to disclose in a matter of fact way. This contrasted with his experience of working for British Rail in the early 1990s where he had decided not to reveal his sexuality particularly as he perceived his line manager as being homophobic (see Table 6).

6.8. Playing up to stereotypes and use of humour in identity management

A self-presentation strategy repeatedly deployed by a number of respondents (7) was the use of humour as a means of presenting their gay identity to others in the workplace. This self-presentation strategy was deliberately used as a means of 'normalising' their sexuality. An example of this approach was recounted by Godfrey:

'I think it's quite alien to them, to a lot of them. The life that I lead and in fact they would joke about it and I think comedy is a great leveller anyway. They think if they joke about it, it takes away that fear or that feeling of being, you know, different or we're different or whatever it is. And I think that's, why I joke about it as well because everyone can relate to humour I think.' Godfrey, 47, environmental health officer, 'out' in present organisation.

Godfrey argues that he uses humour in how he presents his gay identity as he believes that others can relate to it. By implication it could be argued that Godfrey is influenced in how he feels his work colleagues associate a gay man. He is therefore influenced by others in his presentation, using humour as something others can not only relate to but possibly expect. As discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7, Godfrey attempts to downplay any differences with his heterosexual colleagues. The use of humour in self-presentation strategies in order to 'normalise' potentially discreditable identities seems to concur with Woods and Lucas' findings (1993:185) where their sample of gay male professionals would use humour as a means of 'desensitising' their sexuality or to make their sexuality 'less of a big deal'. In Godfrey's case, he would use a self-deprecating form of humour or make light of his gay identity as a means of winning others over. Godfrey recites a joke he had made just a few days before the interview:

'I had a game of chess with a guy ...I made a couple of silly moves and he got my queen and at that point I just said, "Oh, I give up." Later on in the day, when he was going he made a comment, which I forget, he said something about a queen. He said, "You'll be thinking about the queen at the weekend" and I said something like, "I think about nothing else dear!" Or something like that (laughs). And of course the whole office laughs because they're just used to [it], not camping it up, but that I just make light of it all. That's my way of getting through the day really I suppose.' Godfrey, 47.

There are however problems with this 'normalising' strategy. In many respects, rather than 'normalising' their gay identity the use of humour is actually a form of self-ridicule. A self-presentation strategy through humour might gain a degree of acceptance but on someone else's terms. Here the perceptions of others have influenced the way respondents believe they should present their gay identity. Similarly, Don, (43, gardener), would use humour in order to break down barriers or any perceived differences between himself and his male heterosexual colleagues. Equally, some respondents would make light heart of their own identity by making jokes about their sexuality in an attempt to 'normalise' their sexuality. There are, however, risks in using humour in an attempt to 'normalise' a gay identity. Jokes might lead to unintended outcomes pathologising a gay identity, as something abnormal. Humour was also deployed, as in Ben's case, (44, deputy ward nurse) as a defence mechanism or when confronted with adversity in order

to diffuse a situation (Neal, 27, senior finance operations supervisor). Ben would use humour when confronted with homophobic abuse from patients. Surprisingly there is scant reference to the application of humour as a coping strategy in studies on sexual minorities in the workplace. However, in a different diversity strand, Hyers (2007) noted how women would use humour as a non-assertive response to discriminatory behaviour. My findings shed light on an area that has not been explored in any depth before. These stories also reflect how Goffman (1963) argues the onus is on those with discredited identities to lighten the atmosphere by joking and using humour in order to put those who are perceived as 'normal' at ease.

Linked with humour was the way in which some respondents played up to stereotypes in the management of their gay identities in the workplace either because they felt that it was expected by others or to make light of their own identities. Stereotypes, as Jenkins (2008) argues are based on the categorisation of others. Consequently playing up to stereotypes rather than giving individuals greater agency in shaping their identities does the opposite in reinforcing the meanings and ascriptions of others of a gay identity.

There has been scant previous research based around the ways in which gay men play up to stereotypes in their self-presentation strategies. Williams et al's (2009) research on 32 openly gay and lesbian people in the U.S. noted, however, how some respondents felt constrained by stereotypes in how they were expected to present themselves in the workplace. In my research, Malcolm, 45, for example, whilst teaching trainee bus drivers, used to 'camp it up a bit' to entertain the trainees.

'In our job, teaching people, role play comes into things and I'll camp it up a bit and all sorts of things, you know, to do with passengers and elderly passengers.'
Malcolm, 45, bus driver.

In Malcolm's case, he would play to gay stereotypes in order to gain popularity with his co-workers. Nevertheless, by objectifying himself in this manner he was making his gay identity the butt of humour. Just under half of the respondents (19) in their self-presentation strategies would 'camp it up' in the workplace as form of entertainment. Nigel, 29, a secondary school chemistry teacher, for example, recalled how he

deliberately put on a 'performance' by being 'flamboyant' in the classroom as a way of getting his pupils enthused about his subject. There are however unintended repercussions in adopting this strategy. Playing up to stereotypes might backfire where others might perceive a gay identity as something exotic or abnormal.

A theme that arose from the data in relation to playing up to stereotypes was the way in which some respondents (3) would parody themselves by drawing upon gay characters popular at the time in the British media. A typical example is illustrated in Dean's story:

'There was a character in Catherine Tate⁷, who said, 'How dare you!' And he claimed not to be gay, though everybody thinks he's gay. And it was a situation where it was something silly, so silly that I can't really remember how it goes. I was late in or something and I said, 'Late! How very dare you! Me, dear? No, dear! And that was just sort of banter. Them knowing that I was gay in sort of gay context.' Dean, 42, force enquiry officer, special constable.

In the above story Dean's self-presentation strategy in parodying himself was very much influenced by the external dimension of identity. He was portraying an image that he felt others could relate to and understand. As Jenkins (2008) states, the internal dimension of identity requires a degree of reflexivity. Dean felt a need to present a gay identity with which others in the workplace could easily associate. For the same reason, Godfrey would make stereotype gay jokes in front of work colleagues.

'I do the stereotype jokes because I know that people laugh at it and people understand what I'm joking about.' Godfrey, 47, environmental health officer.

Nevertheless, the playing up to stereotypes used in self-presentation strategies lead, in reflection, to some respondents having regrets. By playing up to stereotypes they felt they were reinforcing the negative identity categorisations that others held of gay men. Furthermore, the self-presentation strategy of playing up to stereotypes had backfired in the sense that it had created an identity that they did not wish themselves to be portrayed as. Roy's story is a typical example of this, where playing to a gay stereotype created a perception in the eyes of his work colleagues of what others perceived a gay identity to be.

⁷ Catherine Tate is a British comedian who performs sketch shows on TV.

'Just talking about what they want to hear really. That was all. You know, about women's stuff, if you like, make-up, that kind of thing. There were certain situations in the other company, which I think, oh, I wish I hadn't said that! I wish I hadn't got myself in that situation. I didn't know how to get out of the situation really, because if you tell somebody, if you kind of camp it up a bit [and then say] I am not really like that. Now come on! Don't be silly! You know, it's their thoughts of me. So I said to myself when I left there, right, that's not going to happen anymore.' Roy, 47, electronic technician, 'out' in this organisation.

Roy's case illustrates the way in which the internal dimension of identity is in constant flux. Roy reflects upon the self-presentation strategy he deployed at his previous organisation with deep regret. He thus decided to modify and recreate the self-presentation strategy he wished to deploy in his next workplace which he moved to three years ago, in light of the reactions he received from others. In his present organisation, Roy has reconstructed his self-presentation strategy avoiding any possible playing up to gay stereotypes in front of his co-workers (see Table 6).

Similarly, Stan, 35, a primary school deputy head, regretted moments at school where he had played to expected stereotypes. Stan recalled how at one school pantomime he ended up being the Christmas fairy primarily because his work colleagues saw him suited to this role.

'We would always do a pantomime in the last few days of the Christmas term and it was seen as very funny amongst the staff if Stan would be the Christmas fairy. Stan would be Cinderella cos Stan likes to put the dress on. And in a way, that was quite funny and I went along with it. But looking back, what was it about?' Stan, 35, primary school deputy head, 'out' in present organisation.

Stan's story illustrates how, according to Jenkins (2008), the external dimension of identity impacts upon the internal dimension. Stan felt obliged to dress up in drag as a fairy under pressure from his work colleagues. The identity categorisation by others in the workplace led them to perceive the dressing up as a fairy as an apt role for Stan, an openly gay man, to play. In some respects, Stan felt he fell into the trap of playing to a stereotype that others perceived a gay man to be.

George, 44, a bus driver and Ben, 44, a deputy ward nurse, on the other hand, would play to gay stereotypes in their self-presentations partly to entertain but also as a deliberate means of defining themselves in the eyes of others. George and Ben would seem to fit into what Brekhus (2003) terms ‘*gay lifestylers*’. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, this is where sexuality becomes the key defining feature in defining oneself. In the internal dimension of identity, the perceived negative stereotypes ascribed by others, is inverted into a positive value that entails pride and even a political dimension. Ben for example, would describe himself in his self-presentation strategy as playing the ‘fag role’. In Ben’s case, he deliberately uses a derogatory term and turns it into a badge of pride in how he presents himself to others. Similarly, George would actively camp it up in front of the other bus drivers partly for entertainment value but more importantly as an open, defiant expression of his sexuality.

‘And I’ll walk into work and I’ll go, morning girls! I mean they’re all blokes at work (laughs). And I think it’s expected of me [.....] when you’re sort of getting your bus ready and then somebody will walk past and I’ll say, “Can you help open that water cap? I don’t want to break my nails.” I do come out with things like that’ George, 44 bus driver, ‘out’ in present organisation.

These findings seem to support Brekhus’ (2003:12) theory, where some gay men choose to adopt a *lifestyler* approach in how they present their gay identity to others. Like a peacock, according to Brekhus, a *lifestyler* will proudly display their sexuality inverting any negative value into a positive one.

6.9. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have drawn upon the reflective processes that my sample of gay men have undergone in order to answer my key research questions at the beginning of the chapter; namely exploring the significance gay men attach to their sexuality in defining who they are and the self presentation strategies they use in managing their gay identity in the workplace. My findings illustrate the fluidity of social identities. This fluidity is evident in the ways in which my sample of gay men have constructed and

reconstructed their gay identities dependent upon the working environment and occupation they have found themselves in. The table below illustrates a few examples of respondents changing their presentation of their gay identity in response to changing work environments and reactions of others.

Table 7: How respondents changed their presentation of self in response to changes in the working environment:

Name	Present work environment/occupation	Previous Work environment/ occupation
Nigel	Secondary school teacher – ‘monitors his behaviour to be morally superior’ – as he believes he needs to put on a professional image.	Manager in hotel industry – He would ‘camp it up’ and play to banter with co-workers
Roy	Engineering firm – no longer camps it up due experiences in previous organisation	Engineering firm -Used to play up to stereotypes – regrets this strategy as it stereotyped him
Roland	Property surveyor for council. <i>‘I try and keep totally professional in my job... I jealously guard that position’</i> deliberately chooses not to disclose his sexuality. Male dominated organisation.	Owner of a gay B&B in 1990s. Openly gay, went on demonstrations for gay equality
Neal	Financial operator for financial institution - active member of in-company LGBT group. Challenges homophobic comments	Cashier in convenience store – Torrent of homophobic abuse but took no action
James	Administrator in a university, predominately female work colleagues, member of university LGBT group. Freely discusses his sexuality and his partner in everyday conversation	British Rail in 1990s with no LGBT policies and a homophobic manager. James decided not to disclose his sexuality

Although this chapter has uncovered the degree of agency individuals possess in how they present their gay identity it has also highlighted the constraints that respondents have come against. My findings reveal the deep reflective processes my interviewees have experienced in different periods during their working lives. This has been demonstrated in the ways some respondents created an 'out' identity through issues such as the timing and the manner of revealing their gay identity to co-workers and feelings of regret in the way in which they presented their gay identity to co-workers.

One of my key research aims in this chapter was to explore the extent to which gay men deliberately push their gay identity to the forefront in order to make it a dominant one. I chose Brekhus's (2003) concept of lifestylers as an analytical tool to investigate as it most closely related to my investigation. Although Brekhus recognises that his typologies are ideal types, the typology of the lifestyler does not stand up to scrutiny. My findings suggest that there are significant constraints in adopting a lifestyler strategy. Work setting heavily influenced the degree of agency individuals had in adopting this approach. My findings suggest that adopting a lifestyler strategy is only open to those who have multiple opportunities that give them the freedom of choice to do so. For example, the very few respondents who visibly displayed their gay identity worked in organisations with a numerically large visible gay presence combined with institutional support.

Rumens and Kerfoot (2009) have highlighted the perceived incompatibility between presenting a gay identity with a professional identity. Previous research has also shown how gay men have felt constrained in having to sacrifice parts of their gay identity in order to fit into the behaviour and conduct expected of a professional. My findings add to this, revealing the pressures some respondents have come under in how they present a particular form of masculinity where their role requires them to exercise authority. Some of my respondents who worked in positions of authority (teachers, an environmental health inspector and a special police officer) had a heightened awareness of how they performed masculinity. They felt they had to downplay their gay identity in order to give a 'credible' performance and to be seen by others as effective in their roles. They seemed constrained in how they performed their authoritative roles.

Nevertheless, some respondents seized the opportunity that their positions of authority gave them allowing them more freedom and agency in how they managed their gay identity. Three respondents, for example, used the recruitment selection interview for subordinate staff as an opportune moment to disclose their gay identity. This was seen as an effective means of wresting control over subordinates.

More than forty years have elapsed since Goffman developed his theory of stigma management (1968), even so I would argue that it still holds some salience. The stigma attached to a gay identity may not be as pronounced as in the time of Goffman's writing. Goffman's theory still explains the attitudes and self-presentation strategies respondents deployed. A few respondents⁸ expressed their self-loathing or 'misfortune' in their sexuality and how they presented non-normative forms of masculinity. In an attempt to normalise or downplay a gay identity a number of respondents (seven) used humour as a self-presentation strategy. Goffman's work seemed appropriate here where individuals use humour as a means of lightening the stigma attached to their identity. The playing up to stereotypes served a contradictory role. For some respondents such as Malcolm, Dean and Godfrey, playing to stereotypes was a means of making light of their gay identity, but at the same time it could also highlight their marked difference. This was particularly the case for those who worked in occupations where there was a large gay presence such as Ben and Malcolm. Humour, however, is a double edged sword. For those who played up to stereotypes, the strategy occasionally backfired where they became the butt of the joke. On reflection some respondents regretted playing up to stereotypes as rather than normalising their identity it had in some respects pathologised it.

This chapter used Bradley's (1996) concept of active, passive and political identities as an analytical tool to explore whether respondents used their gay identity to mobilise politically. According to Bradley, identities become active when an individual is conscious of being defined in a negative way. In some respects, Bradley's concept of

⁸ Dale 'I am not proud of that fact [that my sexuality defines me], Stan '[My sexuality] it feels like the second best option in life', Roland 'I don't want it [my professional appearance] undermined by them having reason to think that I was a poof.'

active identities reflected the sentiments of a few of my respondents in how they saw themselves. They had a heightened awareness of their sexuality and their perceived difference. This difference was manifested negatively in a number of ways, from feeling immature (Nigel) to a perceived need to perform masculinity in the ways in which they used their bodies (Nigel, Stan and Dale). They defined their gay identity negatively raising its salience as a consequence. Nevertheless, my findings would suggest that active identities are created not solely from negative reactions. Callum, for example, reflected how the positive experience of entering a civil partnership had made him more conscious of his sexual identity. In relation to political identities my findings would seem to concur with Bradley that negative reactions might be a trigger for political mobilisation. My findings, especially from the older respondents, revealed how political identities have waned in recent years. The majority of respondents no longer felt a need to mobilise politically for gay equality as they felt that such battles had already been won. My findings revealed how some respondents had depoliticised gay equality symbols. Ben and George, for example, would wear badges, rings and neck pieces as prestige symbols to make their sexuality known to others even though they did not attach any political meaning to them. My respondents perceived the term political activism with negative undertones. The majority of respondents perceived political mobilisation as too confrontational, yet those who wore gay identity symbols did not see the contradiction that others might see these symbols as being overt.

The next chapter moves the focus of investigation away from the internal dimension of identity to the external dimension. Here the emphasis is exploring how gay men believe others see them and the impact on how they manage gay identity in the workplace.

Chapter 7

Gay identity management and others in the workplace

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, drawing from my conceptual framework, I wish to focus on the external dimension of identity. The external dimension is according to Jenkins (2008) how others see us. It is the categorisation and evaluation of our identities by others. Group identification and categorisation as Jenkins proposes is very much a two way mirrored process. *Who we think we are is intimately related to who we think others are, and vice versa.* (Jenkins 2008:12). Identity is about understanding who we are and who other people are. At its very core are the concepts of difference and similarity. The two concepts work interdependently. Identity is not just about what we have in common with others but also what sets us apart. As with the chapter on the internal dimensions of identity (see Chapter 6), the two dimensions; the external and the internal are interwoven and inextricably linked. The two components, the internal and external dimensions impact and influence each other. The separation of the internal and the external dimensions of identity is an artificial construction and as Jenkins (2008:47) insightfully points out, given that the two dimensions work simultaneously it makes it rather problematic to treat them in isolation or write about! How we see ourselves is very much dependent on how others see us. According to Jenkins (2008:42) identity construction is not a unilateral process. Identities need to be validated by others to be meaningful. How others categorise and see us is as equally important as how we see ourselves.

The focus of this chapter is to explore how others such as work colleagues and customers react and respond to gay co-workers. My fieldwork did not involve interviewing and collating information from these co-workers. The data I collected was solely obtained through interviewing 45 self-defined gay men. Of course, in order to fully investigate how others react and respond to gay co-workers one strategy would have been to have interviewed respondents' work colleagues directly. However, this would have posed

serious ethical and practical challenges. Nevertheless, I was able to extract from the interviewees' perceptions of how they felt others saw them and in turn this enabled me to consider how the external dimension of identity influences gay men's identity management strategies.

Within the first part of this chapter I aim to explore whether my sample of gay men felt that their gay identity was a marked one or a master status in the eyes of others. To unpack this concept I will explore the sub themes of stereotyping and tokenism. The second part of this chapter will explore how others appear to mark difference and create social boundaries. This is broken down into the sub themes of discomfort, distance, policing masculinity and exclusion to inclusion. Finally, the concept of silence as a form of exclusion is investigated.

Here I wish to illustrate the ways in which my sample of gay men felt others saw them in the workplace. In particular, I aim to answer one of my key research questions namely:

How do gay men perceive other colleagues react and respond to their sexuality?

The following themes extracted from the interviews will be analysed in relation to the external dimension of identity:

- (i) Marked identities, tokenism and stereotyping.
- (ii) Drawing social boundaries: discomfort, distance, exclusion and inclusion.
- (iii) A vacuum of silence.

7.2. Marked identities, tokenism and stereotyping

As discussed in Chapter 3, marked identities according to Brekhus (2003) are attributes that are socially salient and are perceived as highly relevant, whilst unmarked identities are perceived as generic and are typically ignored as irrelevant to whom one is. A marked identity is one which is accented and socially highlighted and quite often stigmatised whereas an unmarked one is taken-for-granted. Examples of unmarked identities might

include 'heterosexual', 'male', 'middle class' or 'white'. Marked identities, on the other hand, according to Brekhus, might include 'black', 'woman', 'immigrant' or 'gay'. Those identities that are socially marked receive far more attention by others as coherent social categories than unmarked identities. Brekhus argues in relation to the contemporary U.S. that 'gay' is a salient identity attribute. The concept of marked identities is similarly referred to in Woods and Lucas's (1993:181) U.S. research as 'abnormal' identities in the context of normalising identities. 'Abnormal' identities receive a heightened level of attention and scrutiny.

'They [abnormals] become the gay engineer, the foreign boss the black accountant, the top-ranked salesman. Their difference, whether valued or devalued, sets them apart.' Woods and Lucas. (1993: 181). [Their emphasis].

There are also parallels to marked identities in Kanter's research (1977) on tokenism. According to Kanter, those who are a numerically minority group capture a disproportionate awareness share compared to numerical dominants. Tokens refer to those who are defined by their master status or difference and their ascribed characteristics in contrast to the dominants. Woods and Lucas (1993) define tokenism as:

'Whenever the few must interact with the many, they often find that their behaviour is interpreted symbolically. They become tokens and are treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals.' Woods and Lucas (1993:213)

According to Kanter, there are a number of conceptual phenomena that characterise the relationship between tokens and dominants. First, tokens have a higher visibility in the eyes of others because of their minority status. Second there is the perceptual tendency to exaggerate or polarise differences between the tokens and the dominants. The numerically dominant become more aware of their commonalities and their differences from the token. Within this chapter I aim to explore whether my respondents perceive that others such as work colleagues view them as different marking them apart, possibly exaggerating differences through stereotyping.

Furthermore, I aim to explore whether those that my respondents interacted with perceived that others mainly saw them through their gay identity as a marked one that defined them above all else. Of course I only interviewed gay men in my research. Consequently, the themes and data I obtained derived solely from the respondents' perceptions of how they believed their gay identity was seen by others. I aim to investigate whether my respondents believed that co-workers and customers saw them as different setting them apart from their heterosexual counterparts. Just over a quarter (12) of my respondents believed that their gay identity had become a marked one in the eyes of others at some stage in their working lives. A marked identity does not necessarily mean, as in the case of my findings, that a gay identity is *always* at the forefront of how others see gay men. A gay identity may become accentuated at certain moments, this is illustrated below through the jokes, stories, gifts and nicknames that respondents recounted. The marked identity came to the fore when triggered by others. In Andrew's case, the marked identity was triggered by others in order to express difference in a public setting and possibly deployed as an affirmation of heterosexuality. Andrew, 41, a systems change coordinator for a bank, recalled an incident where a poem about a work colleague was read out at a leaving party in a pub just a week before I interviewed him. At some stage during the poem's citation confirmation of him not being gay was mentioned. At the same time the poet pointed a finger at Andrew as a symbolic gesture to mark difference. This act not only reinforced the perceived superiority of heterosexual masculinity but also labelled Andrew's gay identity as inferior and as having less validity. Andrew expressed how he felt upset and threatened by the labelling of his sexuality in a public setting. The story illustrates what Kanter (1977:975) refers to as *boundary heightening*. The poem was a means of creating group commonality amongst the dominants (heterosexuals) and at the same time mark difference to the token. Similarly, Donald, 43, a gardener, noted how others marked difference by informing new employees of his sexuality. The typical banter amongst the gardeners was around the topic of women. A common public announcement was '*of course that [women] doesn't interest Don.*' Such public announcements of difference by other work colleagues made Donald feel rather uncomfortable. They also served the purpose of affirming shared in-group understandings amongst the dominants.

In Morris' case, a primary school teacher, the marked identity was raised by a parent primarily to draw commonality to his child's difference, a learning difficulty, rather than to draw difference to heterosexuality.

'He made some comment about, I think it was along the lines of how his son was different in some regard and how it was important for teachers, for instance, to respect the kind of diversity within their classes and any kind of perceived difference in his son and surely you ought to appreciate that. And the emphasis from what I remember was on the 'you'. Respect my son because he's different or else I might suddenly take to showing you a certain disrespect because I perceive you as different.' Morris, 33, primary school teacher.

Kris, a taxi driver, recounted how his work colleagues gave each other nicknames. The nicknames were based on key distinguishing differences that set each of them apart. All the taxi drivers' nicknames were based upon physical attributes apart from Kris, where they used labels such as 'faggot' and 'flamer' using his sexuality to mark difference. Although he did not see these labels as being derogatory or feel that the fact that they based nicknames around his sexuality necessarily made his gay identity a marked or dominant one, he nevertheless became frustrated with them for making it the key focus.

'I think I have been a bit frustrated with people at work because there's more to me than that [my sexuality], cos all they can go on about is gay, gay, gay.' Kris, 30, taxi driver.

Nearly half the respondents (22) had heard derogatory homophobic labels or had had work colleagues call them by such labels at some stage in their working life. This would seem in line with Ellison and Gunstone's research (2009) where 63 per cent of gay men experienced name calling. Paul, who worked in retail, recalled affectionately how others would refer to him as 'Pauline the drama queen'. Although he did not mind the term being used, the fact that the label assigned by others was based upon his sexuality, I would argue, only illustrated his marked difference in the eyes of others of his token status. The nicknames and labels assigned to respondents reflected how others often categorise gay men. These labels were predominately based on common associations of gay men with effeminacy. The labels were a means of marking difference. The names assigned to my sample of respondents included; 'Queenie' (George, 44), 'Princess

(George, 44), 'Diva', (Morris, 33), 'Flamer', (Kris, 29), 'John Barrowman' (Callum, 29), 'John Inman', (Ronald, 63) and 'Sailor' (Ivan, 43).

Of course, a marked identity does not necessarily need to be verbally expressed in terms of derogatory labels as outlined above. The salience others attach to a gay identity can be conveyed in other ways such as in the gifts presented to some of my respondents. Gifts can often be a means of understanding what others think of us without it having to be conveyed in words. Morris, for example recalled how one of his pupils presented him with a pink sash with the words 'birthday diva' inscribed along it;

'It was my birthday last year and one of the girls I teach brought in a bright pink sash for me to wear at school.... which said in sparkly letters across the front of it 'Birthday diva' (laughs). I mean I suppose that it is fairly obvious that her mum at least clocked on and was making a bit of a light hearted joke about it all. Whether the little girl herself realised the kind of implications of bringing that in I can't be sure.' Morris, 33, primary school teacher.

A similar story was raised by Kris, where a fellow taxi driver gave him a pair of pink fluffy dice to hang in his taxi. Again the gift centred round his sexuality. In the above two examples the respondents did not mind that others had made light hearted fun of their difference. In Isaac and Robert's cases, however, the 'gifts' they received, a cucumber and a blow up ring cushion not only brought to the fore their sexuality but also were perceived as offensive acts done deliberately to humiliate. The gifts in the final two examples were a means of exaggerating differences focusing solely on gay men as sexual beings rather than other aspects of their identity.

A few respondents believed because their sexuality was visible they were therefore identified primarily through their sexuality. This was the case for Dale, a receptionist for a leisure complex. Dale was conscious of the reactions of others, particularly customers, in the way he used his body to display masculinity in contrast to what Connell (2005:79) refers to as *normative masculinity*. He would occasionally overhear comments from customers leaving the ticket booth referring to his sexuality in a derogatory manner.

'They [customers] would pick up on gestures and comments. Do you know what I mean? People walk away and might say, oh, he's a poof or something like that. I am not saying it's happened a lot, but it has happened.' Dale, 36, receptionist for a leisure complex.

As in Dale's case, the marked identity or difference was defined in the way they disrupted *normative masculinity*⁹. Callum, a regional retail bank manager, recalled how one of his subordinates would call him John Barrowman¹⁰, because of the way he walked.

'He always calls me John Barrowman, whenever I walk through and how always that I mince around the office. And he was joking the other day, cos they were doing a rear of the year award as part of their Christmas party and then he nominated me for the rear of the year in the female section. Just like jokes but they're not like [offensive].' Callum, 29, regional manager for a leading retail bank

The male subordinate in the story above not only makes Callum's sexuality a marked identity but also stereotypes gay men with femininity by jokingly placing parts of his body into the female category. This example would seem to illustrate what Segal (2007) refers to as dominant ideals of masculinity. Callum's co-worker attempts to mark difference by distancing homosexuality from what is deemed 'masculine'. As Segal argues the social construction of masculinity is one in which:

'To be 'masculine' is not to be 'feminine', not to be 'gay', not to be tainted with any marks of 'inferiority.' Segal (2007:xxxiv)

These examples would also seem to concur with Phellas' (1998) findings in his research on gay Greek-Cypriots in the U.K. where individuals who reveal a visible gay identity become identified primarily in terms of their sexual identity.

Another way in which it could be interpreted that others in the workplace view a gay identity as a marked one could be through the jokes they play. Jokes are often used as a means of highlighting differences or a way of focusing on a particular facet of one's

⁹ Normative masculinity is defined as *what men ought to be* (Connell, 1995:70). According to Connell, it is not necessary to clearly define the term masculinity. It is a relational term defined by what it is not, femininity.

¹⁰ John Barrowman, a famous, openly gay Scottish-American, singer, actor, dancer, musical performer and media personality.

identity that distinguishes one from another. Just over a third of my respondents (16) could recall moments at work where their sexuality had become the butt of a joke. An example of this is where Dean, 42, a force enquiry officer, reflected how on occasion his sexuality might be brought into a joke. Likewise, Dec, 36, recalled a practical joke where a male heterosexual colleague passed a piece of office equipment, a hole re-enforcer, around the office stating that Dec had requested it. Dec did not see the joke as being offensive and took it in a light hearted way. Typically the jokes were based around gender and how others evaluated gay men against *normative masculinity*. Neal, 27, for example, who worked as a team manager in an international bank recalled;

'There's this little joke you have to go about four levels up [in the organisation] before you get to a man.' Neal, 27, team manager.

The joke here revolved around Neal, not being a 'real' man. Similarly, Hans, 59, an EFL teacher, recounted a joke where a female colleague ribbed him for the way he performed masculinity in how he dressed;

'I wore the other day a blue rugby shirt with a number seven on the sleeve. And I wore it to work and one of the ladies who's very open about this said, "And who are you trying to kid coming in looking as butch as you possibly can!" But those are things that make the day go by and they're pleasant. I don't take any offence to that kinda stuff.' Han, 59, EFL teacher.

In many respects the jokes outlined above were reinforcing a socially constructed idealised form of masculinity. These jokes were a means of drawing a distinction or a difference from what Connell (2005:70) refers to as 'real' masculinity. This 'real' masculinity Connell terms as hegemonic masculinity one which is constructed in relation to and against femininity and subordinated forms of masculinity. The jokes reinforced a dominant cultural assumption in western society in which, as Connell (2005:161) argued gay men are defined as effeminate. According to Connell:

'Gayness in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity.' Connell (1995:78)

Consequently, gayness according to Connell is associated with femininity. The interviewees bear some similarities to Connell's theoretical perspective. This links with the next sub theme, how others stereotype gay men in how they perform masculinity.

7.3. Stereotyping

Stereotyping was a recurrent theme, reflecting previous research (Ward 2008; Shallenberger 1994; Woods and Lucas 1993 and Rumens 2008b). For some, (five) such as Roy, 47, there was the perception from work colleagues that there was a close association between a gay identity and adopting feminine attributes and tastes. Some of the female work colleagues assumed that Roy would be interested in women's clothes, make-up and fashion. As a result, the female workers had effectively imposed an identity on him that was not of his volition. The management of his gay identity had been taken out of his hands. It was for this reason that Roy eventually decided to leave the organisation 3 years ago.

'I left because of that reason [stereotyping] in the end. I didn't like it. I didn't like the situation that they were putting me into. I didn't like being patted on the head and said, oh come for a girlie chat or this kind of thing.' Roy, 47, engineer, 'out' at work in this organisation.

The stereotyping by Roy's work colleagues concurs with Segal's (1990:149) stand point that there is an *assumption that to be homosexual is to adopt some of the characteristics of the opposite sex*. My findings, particularly in the case of those working in blue collar occupations, revealed what Connell (1987) refers to as hegemonic masculinity. This was manifested in the subordination of certain masculinities. Alex, 34, who had previously worked in a warehouse as a stock controller recalled how his work colleagues used to call him an *old woman* solely because he demanded cleanliness and order in the handling of tools and equipment. Likewise, Phil, 31, who had also worked in a warehouse recalled how his co-workers would make jokes associating homosexuality with femininity. They would link his lack of holding a driving licence with being *lady like*.

'Well, it's the just the fact that I'm gay. I drive a fork lift but I don't drive a car as I don't have a driving licence. You know so it's all the funny jokes about

that.....Some women still don't drive and stuff like that and of course it's the hand reference to being slightly lady like.' Phil, 31, warehouse worker in this occupation.

Phil's story illustrates a form of tokenism. His work colleagues exaggerate difference with themselves associating his sexuality and his inability to drive a car with effeminacy. Hans' story is another example of stereotyping where others associated gay men with effeminacy. He recounted a story when a student told him that he could always identify a gay person by the way he walks and his mannerisms.

'And I challenged this. And I walked to the window. Opened the window, sat down and said, 'Did you notice anything?' And he said, 'No'. So I said 'Oh, well, your theory doesn't work, does it? I mean cos I'm a gay guy and you didn't notice, did you?' Hans, 59, EFL teacher, 'out' at work.

These findings would seem to support Connell's (1995) theoretical standpoint that in the contemporary western world patriarchal culture associates gay men with a lack of masculinity. As Connell argues the pervasive assumption in our culture is that:

'If someone is attracted to the masculine, then that person must be feminine – if not in the body, then somehow in the mind.' Connell (1995:143)

Another stereotype as briefly discussed further below in relation to the sub theme piece of curiosity was the assumption that gay men have a voracious sexual appetite. This stereotype was also uncovered in Ward's research (2008), where he noted how gay men are perceived as lascivious and sexually charged. Two respondents recalled incidents where they felt clients or co-workers assumed that the respondents, Louis, 32, and Ben, 44, would be interested in them in a sexual way. They assumed that just because they were male that they would make sexual advances towards them. Louis recounted incidents in the pub he ran with his partner where male customers assumed that they would have sexual desires for them:

'There were assumptions like, 'Who have you got your eye on tonight then?' Actually I do remember saying to a few lads just because you're a bloke doesn't mean I fancy you. Go and look in the mirror mate. You're ugly!' Louis, 32, pub landlord, 'out' at work.

7.4. A Piece of curiosity

A closely connected issue in relation to marked identities and difference is the theme of how my sample of gay men felt that work colleagues perceived them as a piece of curiosity, as something exotic or strange. This links with Kanter's (1977) concept of tokenism, where minorities capture a heightened visibility in the eyes of the numerical dominant. Curiosity is probably raised because gay men who reveal their sexual identity stand out in organisations where they are a minority against a numerically dominant heterosexual grouping. Just under a third of respondents (13) had experienced this reaction from others at some stage in their working lives. Probably the most explicit expression of this was recalled by Mike, 32, in an incident that took place three years ago in his present occupation working for an international bank.

'There was a guy in my office.....He's South African, probably in his mid-thirties, he's got four kids...I'd had a few conversations with him, you know, he was fairly pleasant, but we were in the corridor and he said to me, he said "I've heard these rumours that you're gay" and I'm like, I am. And he said, "I have never met anyone gay before".....It was a bit strange. It took me back a bit...It was just some kind of novelty.' Mike, 32, Software Analyst. 'Out' at work.

In many respects the co-worker's reaction to discovering Mike's sexuality is a good example of group categorisation by others. The work colleague identifies his own presumed normality - heterosexuality. In so doing, he marks his difference to what he perceives as possibly odd and unusual. Mike's story is also a good illustration of what Kanter (1977) refers to as tokenism. The novelty the co-worker perceives, unaccustomed to having a gay person around, brings to the fore a heightened awareness of difference. My findings would seem to resonate with Woods and Lucas's research on gay male professionals in the U.S. nearly twenty years ago, where they note:

'To coworkers, a gay employee is often a novelty. The men and women in his office may be unaccustomed to having a gay person around.' Woods and Lucas (1993:62)

Curiosity meant asking probing and sometimes strange personal questions derived from myths and assumptions of what others assumed were the typical behaviours of a gay man.

Typically questions were based on a heterosexual template on the assumption that gay couples would adopt male or female roles reflecting heterosexual relationships.

I've had some questions that I have been sort of amused by. Like which one of you is in charge? I would always say of course I'm in charge. I'm always in charge.I say it's the same, you know, who makes the decisions in your house about where to go on holiday or who does the shopping.....It's the same in my household. We both like to think that we're in charge and we have the top say, but you know, in reality we'll have different stands on different things.' Dean, 42, force enquiry officer, LAGLO, Special constable

In this example, the questioner transposes patriarchal assumptions of dominance and control. Similarly, the assumptions of taking on socially constructed masculine or feminine roles reflecting heterosexual hegemonic masculinity was conveyed in some of the questions that Dec, 36 and Neal, 27 had been asked.

'People always say to me....does one of you take a more feminine role and duties. I said, no, you just share it.' Dec 36, senior contracts administrator.

The above example seems to reflect Connell's (1995:68) supposition that in western cultures the terms 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are polarised character types as relational opposites. Michael, 50, noted how some of his younger co-workers would ask him questions from a heterosexual perspective:

'Particularly some of the younger ones will [ask questions] if you're in a gay bar, who chats to who first? You know, because obviously when we're in a straight bar, it's normally the man that would chat up the woman. So how do you assume roles?...You know, ridiculous questions really, but it's them just wondering how it works. Because I am the only gay in the office I think they are naturally curious.' Michael, 50, regional recruitment manager. 'Out' in this occupation.

The questions raised by co-workers outlined above can be characterised as taking heterosexuality as the benchmark or the frame of reference. In the debate over sameness and difference, as Bacchi (1990:x) argues, difference is normally determined by distance from a point of reference. In this case, the point of reference is heteronormative assumptions of gender. Homosexuality is defined from a heterosexual norm with entrenched gender roles. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, categorisation and identification by others has as its core the concepts of sameness and difference. Sameness

requires a point of reference and in relation to sexuality, the point of reference is heterosexuality. This seems to reflect Chambers' (2007) theoretical standpoint where society takes the view that heterosexuality is the norm in terms of identity, practice and behaviour. Heterosexuality is therefore the benchmark or as Chambers puts it the *median point of the curve* (2007:663). Other sexual identities are evaluated against how far they deviate from the median of what is deemed as 'normal'.

The questions addressed to respondents also seem to reflect what Butler (1990) coins as the heterosexual matrix. The foundation is the pervasive assumption that gender and sexuality are fixed. The premise underlying the heterosexual matrix is that if one identifies as a given gender one should act according to one's gender.

Nevertheless, a few respondents (four) believed that they were no longer looked upon by others as something different or a piece of curiosity. Greg, 45, for example, noted how perceptions of his gay identity had changed over the past 20 years.

'Over the past twenty years we have moved a long way. At first you were almost like a celebrity. I don't mean it like that, but you were something different and now I'm not.' Greg, 45, business manager for a life assurance company.

Simon, 42, expressed similar sentiments:

'We're all a bit less phased by the whole thing [homosexuality] now. Everybody knows tons of gay people and it just ain't a big deal.' Simon, 42, senior managing director of a leading retail chain.

Interestingly these four respondents worked in organisations where there was a numerically large visible gay presence. Kanter (1977) in her study of women working in organisations where men vastly outweighed the much smaller number of women came to the conclusion that as the minority group in numerical terms gets larger so the awareness share they receive by the dominants diminishes. Those respondents who felt that others perceived them as different or as a piece of curiosity (referred to by Kanter as tokens) were in the main the only visible gay employee that they were aware of in their organisation.

The curiosity manifested itself in the types of questions others asked respondents about their sexuality. In the case of just under a quarter of respondents (10), the questions were normally of an explicit sexual nature. Similar findings were uncovered in Giuffre et al's (2008) research of LGB workers in 'gay friendly' organisations. The fact that the questions were predominately of this type would seem to suggest that others primarily saw their gay identity through the sexual act. This would seem to confirm Ward and Winstanley's (2003:1256) conclusion to their findings that it is *as if gay people have a sexual orientation, but straight people do not.*

Nigel's sentiments, 29, a secondary school teacher, would seem to concur with Ward and Winstanley's conclusions. In response to the teenage children's questions of an explicit sexual nature he would ask them whether they would ask such questions to the heterosexual teachers in the school. Nigel felt that there were double standards where students would raise intrusive questions into his personal life but not to the heterosexual teachers.

Typical questions that respondents recalled included; *Who's the top? Who's the Bottom?* (Phil, 31), *How do you guys do it* [the sexual act]? (Alex, 34), *What do you do in bed? Have you ever had sex with a woman?* (Nigel, 29). In some of these examples one interpretation is that the possible intention was to embarrass and humiliate the respondent. A few respondents expressed their discomfort and embarrassment in answering such questions. As Donald recalled:

'I have had personal questions about my sex life for a while from a particular person, which I felt uncomfortable about, but then....you tell them to mind their own business and [they] back down.' Donald, 43, gardener, 'out' in his present occupation

These personal, intrusive questions put respondents in a difficult position in knowing how to respond. It is probably not surprising given the open invitation that co-workers and in some cases customers had presented them with that some respondents, particularly those who felt comfortable with their sexuality, took it as a cue to directly answer their questions (as discussed in the next chapter). It would seem in some cases that such personal and crude questions were asked to deliberately humiliate and embarrass rather

than genuine curiosity. In order to counteract this and possibly portraying a position of strength, some respondents would give direct answers. The response of Alex's colleague, a labourer, was a typical example from those respondents who had experienced such intrusive questioning:

'But he'll beg the question and say, 'Oh, so how do you guys do it?'And then he wishes he never asked.' Alex, 34, fencing contractor, 'out' at work.

Similar findings were uncovered by Woods and Lucas (1993:185) where respondents would give direct answers with regards to their sex lives in order to silence colleagues.

Likewise Dale, 35, a receptionist at a leisure complex, who was working in the cloakroom one evening, recounted a similar story. Two female customers had lost their coat tickets. They thus decided to take out their frustration on Dale as he would not give their coats back until every coat had been collected. The two women, who clearly suspected that Dale was gay, decided to embarrass him by asking him personal questions of a sexual nature, even though it was evident they were not really seeking an answer.

'And then they asked me like, 'Excuse me, do you take it up the arse? And stuff like that. And it's like embarrassing cos you're not in that mode. I find that difficult with customers.' Dale, 35, receptionist/ assistant operations manager. 'Out' in this occupation.

In Dec's case, questions of a sexual nature were raised by female work colleagues partly out of curiosity but also to make the heterosexual male co-workers feel uncomfortable.

'I think you get to a point where the girls try to push the conversation to the point where the men will be a little uncomfortable with it....they might ask about sexual thingsIt's probably pushing towards the more sexual things or suggesting things which the guys are generally uncomfortable...Of course it's quite fun to push that as well. So with the banter that goes on. I am quite happy to do it.' Dec, 36, senior contracts administrator. 'Out' in this occupation.

The discomfort felt by the heterosexual male colleagues resonates with Connell's (2005:40) theoretical and empirical work on masculinities where he cites heterosexual men's hostility to gay men as a necessary means of drawing a distinction between defining 'real' masculinity and in so doing marking distance from the other,

homosexuality. Although in Dec's example, the male co-workers do not show direct hostility to discourses around homosexuality, their discomfort might be their way of drawing social boundaries.

7.5. Drawing social boundaries: discomfort, distance, policing normative masculinity and exclusion to inclusion

A theme that arose from the data was how others created social boundaries (Kimmel, 1994) in setting themselves apart. My interpretation of social boundaries is the ways in which others set themselves apart in order to mark difference. These social boundaries manifested themselves in various means demonstrated through discomfort, distance, exclusion to inclusion. I will now discuss each of these concepts in turn.

7.5.1 Sensing discomfort

Just over a third of respondents (16) felt they had sensed the discomfort of male colleagues to their sexuality. The respondents quite often felt this discomfort through the body language that others portrayed. Louis, 32, who was working for a retail chain, noted the discomfort his regional manager conveyed in his presence.

'He wouldn't stay in the same room as me. He wouldn't look me in the eye. He would never look me in the face. He would sort of run in and say what he had to say and run out again. He just wouldn't hang around. He wouldn't stay around me.' Louis, 32, retail manager.

Although one can only speculate, given that the regional manager was also Louis' line manager, there were potential implications beyond their working relationship including; lack of networking and promotional opportunities, poor communication and possible exclusion. Isaac, 41, a finance manager, experienced a similar reaction with his own line manager.

'There was always a feeling that I had that he was never overly comfortable talking about it [Isaac's personal life] in terms of his manner and his body language when we discussed things.' Isaac, 41, finance manager.

In Ivan's case, working in a male dominated factory, the expressions of discomfort displayed through body language, unlike the above two examples, came from his subordinates or people he had an indirect relationship with.

'It's the way they look at you and put their head down, won't they? And walk away or shake their head. This is people under me, builders, plumbers, but they don't know me and I don't care. I don't know them and they don't affect what I do in my job. If they don't want to work with me they can leave the site!' Ivan, 43, factory manager. 'Out' at work.

A few respondents sensed the discomfort of others manifested in an unwillingness to discuss any matters pertaining to homosexuality. As discussed in section 7.10 below, these respondents noticed a degree of silence from others surrounding discourses around the respondents' sexuality. Peter, 35, an electrician, who had not disclosed his gay identity to his all-male team, observed the discomfort his colleagues displayed during a mandatory diversity awareness training session when the issue of sexuality was raised. Such reactions were probably contributing factors in Peter's decision not to disclose his own sexuality to co-workers. Likewise, Stan, 35, deputy head of a primary school, equated the lack of conversation around mundane aspects of his personal life to possible discomfort.

'There are some people that would never come up to me and say how is Simon [Stan's partner]? Or what did you do at the weekend? But I don't know if that's because of the position I'm in.' Stan, 35, deputy head, 'out' in this occupation.

7.5.2 Creating distance

A common observation amongst six respondents was the distance some work colleagues kept between the respondent and themselves. One possible reason for the distance was that any closeness might taint others by association. There might be the fear that others might question their sexuality. The apparent distance that these respondents had experienced might be due to what Kimmel (1994:127) refers to as the tenuous and fragile construction that the term 'masculinity' is based upon. Homosexuality disrupts the concept of hegemonic masculinity and brings into question the term 'real' men.

Its stability is very much dependent on its distance from homosexuality. As Segal states:

'The maintenance and stability of contemporary heterosexual masculinity is deeply dependent upon its distance from, and obsessive denunciation of, an opposing category – that of the homosexual.' Segal (2007:115)

In one extreme case, a mother who worked in the same bank as her son, told her son not to have his picture taken with one of the respondents (Andrew, 41) as it would give him a bad name. Another example, recounted by Donald, 43, was when he had invited a heterosexual male colleague to his house to watch a film. Donald noticed the discomfort displayed in his work colleague's body language. It was only after ascertaining that other workmates were coming that he accepted the invitation. Donald believed not only that the individual feared being tainted by association but also he feared that there might be unwanted attention from Donald. Similarly, Robert, 46, team manager of a financial institution noted:

'It's almost like a bit of a stigma attached, if they're seen to be getting over friendly with you or chatting to you.' Robert, 46.

7.5.3 Policing normative masculinity

The distance that these respondents experienced from others in the workplace would seem to support Segal's theoretical perspective (2007:115) where she argues that in order that heterosexual masculinity remains stable it is necessary to distance itself from its opposite, namely homosexuality. Such distance requires policing normative masculinity or as Kimmel (1994:132) refers to as constructing gender boundaries so that nothing that might be the slightest bit feminine shows through. Similarly, Segal (1990:212) argues that in order to maintain and reinforce 'normative masculinity' men carry out a mutual, continual and ubiquitous policing of any "effeminate" deviance. My findings revealed a number of examples where others were actively involved in policing 'normative masculinity'.

Shaun, 56, a catering manager for a department store, recalled an incident where a couple of customers had complained about a member of Shaun's staff, an openly gay waiter. The complaint centred around how the waiter displayed non-normative forms of masculinity.

'They just said he was too camp.....I was quite surprised that people would complain about something simple as that....It was just their attitude. It was just the way he walked, the way he talked, the way he was, his mannerisms.' Shaun, 56, catering manager.

Likewise, Roland, 63, a Property project surveyor recalled the abuse a fellow employee received from co-workers in the office.

'We did have a gay boy. He was an admin assistant. He was a lovely lad. He insisted on walking round the office with plastic pink beads round his wrist and round his neck and you know, scarf in a sort of gay fashion and wander around, mincing around the place. Everyone took the piss out of him and I thought I just don't want that to happen to me.' Roland, 63, property project surveyor, not 'out' at work.

As Connell argues, the concept 'masculinity' only exists in relation to its other 'femininity'. The stories that Roland and Shaun experienced illustrate the ways in which gay men may disrupt 'normative masculinity'. The ridicule and mocking of non-normative forms of masculinity are examples of policing 'normative' or 'real' masculinity.

A further example illustrating the policing of 'normative masculinity' is captured in the pupils' reactions and responses to how Nigel, 29, a secondary school chemistry teacher, performed non-normative masculinity in the classroom.

'Camp queen is one of the ones [I am called]. I am often called quite camp when I'm teaching so everybody stereotypes me as camp when I teach....sixth formers have done a mock sort of camp talk behind my back when I've said something to them.' Nigel, 29, secondary school teacher, 'out' at work.

7.6. Exclusion to inclusion

Closely connected to the theme of distance was the issue of exclusion that some respondents experienced. Exclusion came in many forms. For Andrew, 41 it was the

absence of a card and collection in recognition of his civil partnership. As Andrew pointed out:

'The only thing that really annoyed me was, was when someone else got married in the department a card would go round and there'd be a collection, but they didn't do that for me.' Andrew, 41, Systems change co-ordinator for a bank, 'out' at work.

Pat, 52, a director of a legal practice, recounted how he was excluded from social and sporting events. These events were integral moments in establishing network opportunities as well as an avenue to foster good connections with future clients. As Pat recalled:

'I'm not this macho man going off to the golf days and I'm not invited to these cos I don't play. I don't get invited to the twenty twenty cricket. I don't get invited to the matches at Wembley. All of these things, which they're invited to, other clients' sports days and all sorts of fellowship, that goes on. I'm not part of that.' Pat, 52, director of a legal practice.

Pat's experience resonates with a Law Society survey report (2010) where gay male lawyers noted a macho culture within the industry centred around heavy drinking, trips to lap dancing clubs and taking clients to male dominated sports events such as rugby. Such findings certainly do not foster a climate of acceptance and inclusivity.

For Clive, 52, exclusion was experienced by not being invited each and every Friday with members of staff to the pub. The exclusion in this case might be due to identity labels ascribed by his work colleague. In particular, his low status as a site manager compared to the teaching staff combined with his sexuality which he believes, although he had not disclosed his sexuality at work, others suspected.

Exclusion was experienced by two respondents, Pat, 52, and Nigel, 29, in terms of being cut off from basic forms of communication. Nigel recalled, whilst working as a hotel manager, how some of the kitchen staff would deliberately not talk to him. He put it down to homophobia. Likewise, Pat, a director of legal practice, noted how one of his fellow directors would not speak to him. Pat assumed that it was because of his sexuality. It was for this reason that he decided to take early retirement in 2011. These two cases

were probably the most extreme manifestation of exclusion in the workplace. Given the detrimental effects that a breakdown in communication might have on an organisation's functionality, exclusion in this manner is probably a less common means of expressing distance.

A minority of respondents (four) had experienced a clash between their sexual orientation and the religious faiths held by work colleagues. In Nigel's case exclusion had institutional backing. A Catholic school, which Nigel had aspirations to work for, discouraged him from applying for a post because of his sexual orientation.

'If I transferred to a Catholic school they would be allowed to discriminate against me, which I think is one of the most outrageous things left in the school because my lifestyle isn't compatible with the Catholic doctrine. A job came up in a Catholic school. I was advised not to go for it.....The deputy head who I know said, "Don't go. You won't get it." And I said. "Why?" And he said, "Because you're gay." And that was probably the only time in my working career I've ever come across any discrimination.' Nigel, 29, secondary school teacher.

It would seem that although faith schools have to comply with the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, they are allowed to discriminate against teachers whose conduct is not in accordance with the ethos of the school. In Nigel's case, his lifestyle was deemed incompatible with the ethos of the school. Similar stories of discrimination were uncovered in Ferfolja and Hopkins' (2013) study in Sydney, Australia, where two respondents were overlooked for promotion in religious bases schools because of their sexuality.

The stories recounted by respondents were not solely based upon exclusion. There were also positive experiences that reflected a degree of inclusivity with others in the workplace. An example of this was reflected in how work colleagues reacted to those respondents who had entered civil partnerships. In my sample, four of the respondents had entered civil partnerships in addition nearly half (21) were in long term relationships. Since the Civil Partnership Act (2004), there has been scant research on civil partnerships and their impact on gay identity management in the workplace. Some of these respondents (eight) felt that the fact that they were in committed relationships diminished

the differences with their heterosexual work colleagues. Dec, 36, for example, noticed the recognition and inclusivity of others with regards to him recently entering a civil partnership. He was particularly surprised by the positive reaction of one of the shop floor factory workers, where he had previously felt a degree of distance and discomfort.

'There was complete support [for the civil partnership]. One of the things that touched me a bit was [when] I was walking through the repair shops and one of the guys, who I know by face, he says, "It is Dec, isn't it? Oh, I hear congratulations are in order" And said, 'Well done!' And shook my hand and carried on walking.I thought that was really nice and unexpected, especially working there. I mean it's no difference. There doesn't seem to be any difference between heterosexual or homosexual couples at all.' Dec, 36, senior contracts administrator for manufacturing company, 'out' at work.

Some respondents (six) felt that because they were in committed relationships others were more accepting of their lifestyle. Possibly because civil partnerships replicate in many respects heterosexual marriage, as one respondent suggested others are able to identify with them.

'Cos if you've got a partner maybe people are much more accepting. Maybe they identify with you more. Whereas maybe they would modify if you were single.' Adam, 51, IT systems analyst. 'Out' at work, in a civil partnership.

Similarly, Isaac, 41, felt that being in a long term relationship had 'normalised' his gay identity in the eyes of others.

'I feel that others see me as more normal now that I'm a gay man in a relationship....I am sorting of toeing the party line because I'm living with someone and it's very settled.' Isaac, 41, finance manager, 'out' at work.

Likewise, Morris, 33, a primary school teacher, felt that the fact that he was now in a relationship had 'normalised' his gay identity in the eyes of co-workers. He felt that others could relate to him as his lifestyle was similar to his heterosexual colleagues.

'I am not associated with the darker side of the [gay] scene. Now I'm seeing Simon I do other stuff and there are other things to talk about. He and I will go out for dinner. We'll go ice-skating. We're going skiing in a few weeks time. There's much more to talk about.' Morris, 33, primary school teacher.

During the interview with Morris he would use phrases such as *the darker side* and *seedy* to describe a single gay lifestyle. He believed that others would evaluate him in this way if he were still single. Morris felt that being in a committed relationship had brought a degree of respectability in the eyes of his work colleagues. The sentiments outlined above seem to bear some similarities with feminist, Rubin's theoretical standpoint:

'Modern Western societies appraise sex acts according to a hierarchical system of sexual value. Marital, reproductive heterosexuals are alone at the top of the erotic pyramid. Clamouring below are unmarried monogamous heterosexuals in couples, followed by most other heterosexuals.....Stable, long-term lesbian and gay male couples are verging on respectability, but dykes and promiscuous gay men are hovering just above the groups at the very bottom of the pyramid.' Rubin (1984:279).

Although Rubin's analysis of sex acts is nearly thirty years old, a few of the respondents felt that others evaluated them depending on whether they were in stable monogamous relationships or were single. Nigel, 29 and Stan 35 both school teachers felt that others judged them by their marital status.

'Well, I think there's judgements about what you do in the evenings. You're sleeping around. You go from partner to partner. You're having sex in alleyways, you're having sex in the park. There's all of these sorts of ideas that people have in their heads that make it harder for you to be a single gay man.' Stan, 35, deputy head of a primary school.

Nigel recalled how a couple of work colleagues perceived him as a *party animal* simply because he was a single, gay man. Nigel felt that work colleagues evaluated him against their own lifestyles based on married heterosexual relationships with children. The perception expressed by these respondents was that there seemed to be greater inclusivity when their lifestyle closely reflected that of their heterosexual work colleagues.

The majority of respondents (22) who had disclosed their gay identity to others in the workplace believed that their sexuality was no longer an issue. These respondents recalled either a lack of any reaction or a positive response to their disclosure. Typical reactions included: *'People take it all very matter of fact.'* (Adam, 51), *'They couldn't give a toss...I never got any stick when I did 'come out'.'* (Alex, 34), *'There was no*

negative reactions from the guys. ' (Callum, 29), *'There was no reaction at all.'* (Jenson, 40), *'Pretty indifferent, it was just accepted as far as I'm aware at least.'* (Morris, 33). *'Not one bat an eyelid and did do nothing.'* (Stefan, 40). These findings bear similarities with recent public attitude surveys on LGBT people in the UK. Ellison and Gunstone (2009) reported that in an online survey of 5,000 people 83 per cent of heterosexual men and women would be happy or indifferent about the prospect of having a gay manager. They also found in the same survey that 88 per cent would feel the same about having close friends who were openly gay. Of course with changes in social attitudes towards homosexuality combined with recent legislation such as the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, it is probably not surprising that the vast majority of respondents had not received any direct negative reactions. In fact, only one respondent, Andrew, 41, could recall a negative reaction to the disclosure of his gay identity.

'I got a negative response from [him] and he wouldn't talk to me. He was like saying that's sick, that's horrible blah, blah, blah. He was totally anti-gay.'
Andrew, 41, systems change co-ordinator, 'out' at work.

The fact that of those who had disclosed their gay identity in the workplace only one had received a negative response would suggest, at least on the surface, that there is a degree of acceptance and inclusivity from others. Of course negative attitudes might exist beneath the surface but be suppressed because of the legislation. For example, gay harassment could be a sackable offence today. Linked to the issue of exclusion is the theme of silence experienced by a number of respondents.

7.7. A vacuum of silence

A theme drawn from the data was the issue of silence in the workplace. In light of my findings, silence here can be defined in two ways first, as an absence of response from others to discourses around sexuality and second, illustrating the reciprocity of silence, as coined by Ward and Winstanley (2003:1255), a self-protection strategy in order to either downplay or make their gay identity unknown to others. Bell et al (2011) refer to this

self-protection strategy as defensive silence whereas Woods and Lucas (1993) see such silence coming from gay men as an avoidance tactic in order that their sexuality remains hidden. Diagram 1 in Chapter 2 outlines the various sources of silence coming from; the prevailing negative organisational climate, work colleagues in their absence of response and from sexual minorities. I would argue that what is not said or discussed amongst co-workers is as equally important as what is expressed or made apparent. In many respects, the concept of silence is not explored in Jenkins' (2008) analytical framework and in particular in the construction of social identities. This is probably because Jenkins' theoretical concepts focus primarily on more visible identities, namely gender and race. I would argue that Jenkins has overlooked the theme of silence so pertinent to sexuality.

Previous research has broached the issue of silence surrounding gay men (Hall 1989; Day and Schoenrade 1997; Ragins and Cornwell 2001; Shallenberger 1994; Griffin 1991; Woods and Lucas 1993), though it is probably Ward and Winstanley, (2003) and Bell et al (2011) who have developed the concept having unpacked its many facets. Ward and Winstanley (2003) define silence using the metaphor 'negative space'. Like a film negative, the negative reveals what is not present in the picture. They both recognise the multifaceted nature of silence (Ward and Winstanley, 2003:1255), and its function as a form of suppression, censorship, self-protection and resistance. My findings draw some commonality with both Bell et al's (2011) and Ward and Winstanley's (2003) research, particularly where silence is defined as an absence of response from others or used as a defensive strategy.

As discussed in the next chapter, if one is unable to express one's sexuality in the workplace constructing a gay identity becomes problematic. According to Jenkins (2008), identities have a social component. Identities are constructed in the interaction order where the internal and external components of identity meet. Jenkins (2008:44) argues that 'it isn't enough to send a message about identity that message must be accepted by significant others before that identity can be said to be 'taken on''. Of course, if that message is silent or silenced, that identity has little opportunity to be established. If a gay identity is silent in its interactions with others such identity becomes rather stunted. Self-

identity, given the interconnectedness of the internal and external dimensions, is therefore dependent on ‘who I am in the eyes of others’. The silence that surrounds sexuality therefore makes it difficult to frame a sense of who one is. As Day and Schoenrade (1997:148) point out it is normal for work colleagues to have some knowledge about their co-workers’ personal lives and that this is conducive in building trust and rapport. Ward (2008:79) goes further by arguing that the lack of talk and interest in the mundane aspects of co-workers’ private lives could even be construed as an expression of hostility.

Isaac’s story in his present workplace was a good example of this, where mundane conversations pertaining to his private life were rather stilted and lacking in any genuine interest from his line manager. Isaac’s sexual identity was known to most work colleagues, particularly as he was an active member of the organisation’s LGBT network. Nevertheless, he sensed the awkwardness and discomfort his boss had discussing any matters around his personal life.

‘I just never got the impression that he was very comfortable. It was kind of like, he would ask questions because he probably felt he should ask what I’d done for the weekend. There was always a feeling that I had that he was never overly comfortable talking about it, just in terms of his manner and his body language when we discussed things. It was almost like I feel I have to ask the question, but I just want to get it done and out the way and move on to a work thing.’ Isaac, 41, senior finance manager, ‘out’ in present organisation.

In many respects, Isaac’s story is reminiscent of the old phrase ‘the love that dare not speak its name’. Isaac felt obliged to curtail any discussion of his partner or any issues pertaining to his sexuality in front of his boss. The absence of any discussion regarding his sexuality thus restricted the oxygen which would allow any construction of his ‘out’ social identity to flourish and be meaningful. The discomfort that Isaac’s boss displayed draws parallels with Ward and Winstanley’s (2003:1268) observation from one of their mixed focus groups. In the focus group, comparisons were made with the awkwardness and unease felt when a work colleague comes back to work after bereavement. Of course, in Isaac’s case, the discomfort displayed by Isaac’s boss takes on greater significance because it is his line manager with its ensuing authoritative powers. In the interview Isaac

expressed, as outlined above, how he felt he needed to curtail discussions around his private life due to the discomfort and silence he sensed from his boss. This incident illustrates how the dominance of the external dimension imposes a negotiated settlement in how Isaac manages his gay identity. In order to ease the perceived discomfort he senses from his boss Isaac conforms to these pressures by choosing to be silent. Isaac even recalls how he would refrain from discussing mundane issues pertaining to his sexuality with his boss such as his participation in Gay Pride, even though he is an active member of the in-company LGBT networking group so as to make his boss feel comfortable in his presence. By downplaying his sexuality, Isaac was accommodating to the perceived discomfort and anxiety coming from his line manager.

It would seem from the responses of a number of the interviewees that constructing an openly gay identity in the workplace became problematic because of the issue of silence. More than a quarter of my sample recalled how work colleagues had never asked them even mundane questions about their personal lives. Whereas these same respondents knew the personal lives of their co-workers, whether they were married or had a girlfriend, their children and any domestic problems they may be going through, such information was not reciprocal. My findings draw parallels with Woods and Lucas' study of professional gay men (1993:60), where they noted the double standards in which gay men felt compelled to be silent regarding their own sexuality and yet the relentless display of heterosexual discourse was permitted. An example of this was Stefan, 40, who recounted how he probably knew too much about the personal lives of male lorry drivers he managed, yet they never asked him about his own life, or showed any curiosity.

'I suppose I'm there to listen and talk to them and that. They go into too much detail sometimes about some of the problems they do actually have with their wives and children and things like that, their home life. And some of the time it's like I don't really need to know that and I don't really want to know that, but that's just the way they are.' Stefan, 40, logistics manager for a haulage company.

Stefan's story typically reflects a recurrent theme from many respondents (nine) in my sample that they were aware of the personal lives of their co-workers yet their own

personal lives were hardly if ever discussed. Of course, in Stefan's case, he is the manager, which might have made a difference. Subordinates may not have asked him questions about his personal life as they might have felt they were being disrespectful. Nevertheless, I would interpret the absence of response as not only a possible hostile act as argued by Ward and Winstanley (2003) but also a form of exclusion. Such reactive silence or as Willis (2011) coins it as resistant silence from others in the workplace hardly suggest an inclusive welcoming environment for gay men to openly express their sexuality in the workplace.

It is probably not surprising that the lack of inclusivity through the absence of response to a gay identity impacted upon how gay men presented their gay identity. Reactive silence or an absence of any genuine interest in their private lives created a dilemma for a number of respondents. This dilemma is highlighted in Donald's anxiety in how he should deal with 'the gay issue' in the workplace.

'Particularly on the gay issue, they may not know how to perhaps conduct themselves. You know, they might not know what the sort of etiquette is for discussing these things. Do you ask about someone's male partner? Do you kinda hold back a bit? Or am I being a bit too intrusive into Don's personal life, you know? So there's kind of a lot of interplay like that I think. And then I would feel, I would perhaps hold back because I don't want them to feel uncomfortable. So it's probably mirroring each other to a certain extent.' Don, 43, gardener, 'out' in present organisation.

The above quote illustrates the negotiated settlement Donald comes to in order to pacify any discomfort around his sexuality. A repeated theme was how some respondents experienced silence surrounding their sexuality from others, but equally they realised that the silence or editing of information came from respondents themselves in order not to cause any potential discomfort. Of course, it is difficult to know exactly why work colleagues such as in Don's case were silent on what Don terms the 'gay issue', especially as I only interviewed gay men rather than their heterosexual co-workers. Nevertheless, Don's sentiments seem to resonate with Ward and Winstanley's conclusions that 'others' fear one of two things; the fear of offending and the fear of finding out too much.

Silence also came from the respondents themselves. My findings seem to concur with Ward and Winstanley (2003:1255) where silence was used as a form of self-protection. This was particularly the case for those who tried to hide their gay identity in the workplace. Clive, 51, not 'out' at work, for example, would edit any information which might give suspicion of his sexuality. He would for instance refrain from mentioning any gay venues he might have frequented at the weekend as he feared that it might '*open up a whole can of worms.*' Clive used silence as a form of self-protection as he saw the working environment he was in as a hostile one. Furthermore, he feared that as a primary school site attendant, others might link homosexuality with paedophilia. Likewise Peter, 35, not 'out' at work, stated that he would be '*economical with the truth*' in order to mask his gay identity. In these cases, the silence may not just come from co-workers but also the respondents themselves. In Clive and Peter's cases silence came from themselves in what Woods and Lucas (1993) refer to as an avoidance tactic. Given the lack of inclusivity in their workplace they used silence as a means of hiding their sexuality from their work colleagues.

Even those who were 'out' at work needed to be careful in how they managed their identity. Hans, 59, observed how some work colleagues did not feel comfortable or did not particularly like listening to conversations about his sexuality. Sensitive to the reactions of others, Hans has changed the way in which he manages his gay identity in the workplace. Hans argues that a '*more mature*' approach is needed. Hans' story again illustrates the compromised negotiated position he has come to due to the perceived pressures from others in the workplace.

7.8. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have drawn upon stories, incidents and experiences that were extracted from the respondents' interviews in order to answer one of my key research question outlined at the beginning of the chapter; namely exploring whether the respondents' gay identity is a marked identity in the eyes of work colleagues. Just over a quarter of interviewees believed that others identified them primarily through their

sexuality. A few respondents felt because their gay identity was visible in the way they used their bodies to perform non-normative masculinity it brought their sexuality to the fore in the eyes of others. I recognise that one limitation of this research was the fact that the respondents' work colleagues were not interviewed, in order to fully understand whether they saw the respondent's gay identity as a marked one. Nevertheless, an analysis of the data would seem to suggest that work colleagues mark difference through the nicknames, jokes and gifts they assign to a number of my respondents.

My findings would seem to reflect Kanter's (1977) concept of tokenism where differences were exaggerated or accentuated. This was particularly the case where respondents were a visible minority.

A theme that arose from the data was how others drew social boundaries manifested in various ways. Social boundaries ranged from arguably more subtle forms through body language and distance to more direct forms such as exclusion. Although in the vast majority of cases the respondents did not experience more vocal explicit forms of discrimination. In the case of some of my respondents, my findings would seem to suggest that one way social boundaries are maintained is through the policing of normative masculinity. Previous research (Miller et al, (2003), in the police force in Chicago, the U.S., Ward (2006) in the fire service in the U.K., Collinson and Collinson on the shop floor of a male dominated industry in the U.K. in (1989) has uncovered policing masculinity in solely male dominated 'macho' working environments. My contribution to the literature is that such policing also extends beyond traditional 'macho' male dominated occupations. This was illustrated in the stories my respondents recounted in the catering industry, also office white collar workers and within the school environment. In all these cases, respondents or gay colleagues were mocked or ridiculed if they displayed non-normative forms of masculinity in the workplace.

Previous research has uncovered different facets of organisational silence including; as a means of suppressing minority voices, as a form of resistance to a non-heterosexual identity and as a form of hostility. Adding to these studies, my findings have also

uncovered how silence can also be used as a form of exclusion. The lack of any response to a gay identity or a supportive environment that fosters the open expression of a non-heterosexual existence only makes it harder for gay men to have a voice. Using Jenkins' concepts of the internal/external dialectic, the external dimension has limited the degree and in a sense dominated the way in which gay men can present and define a gay identity. If gay men perceive that their work colleagues react with silence, discomfort or distance to their sexual identity the ramifications are that gay men may come to the conclusion that it is not an environment in which they feel able to make their gay identity more visible. Furthermore, exclusion through silence also has consequences and ramifications. Such consequences include barriers to creating a rapport and closer bonds with colleagues necessary for both networking opportunities and career advancement. The implications for HR practitioners are that anti-discrimination policies may not be sufficient in creating a 'gay friendly' organisation. Organisations need to actively encourage and support sexual minorities in giving them a voice.

Even so, my findings would also seem to suggest that for some respondents they have experienced a degree of inclusion and in particular the recent introduction of civil partnerships in the U.K. has brought a breaking down of differences and a 'normalisation' of their gay identity with their heterosexual co-workers. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents who were 'out' in the workplace reported either positive or no reaction to the disclosure of their sexuality. This would seem to demonstrate a degree of inclusivity and acceptance by others.

The stories around silence highlighted in this chapter also represent conformity to an ascribed identity. The dominance of the external dimension as expressed in discomfort and silence illustrate how respondents felt a need to self-edit information or remain silent in order to put others at ease. The issue of conformity will be discussed in greater depth in the last of the empirical chapters exploring how gay men respond to the reactions others in the workplace.

Chapter 8

The dialectic of strategic responses

8.1. Introduction

The focus of this chapter is based on the interaction order. Jenkins (2008) defines the *interaction order* as where our self identities (internal) meet with the external moment or as the dilemma surrounding the *internal – external dialectic*. According to Jenkins, identities are not unilaterally constructed. Identity construction is a two-way process. For individuals, asserting an identity is not sufficient as identity construction is also dependent on categorisation by others and meanings others we interact with place on such identities. In many respects, how we see ourselves may be very different to how others see us. Just as each of us identifies others, equally others identify us in turn. Consequently, what people think about us is no less significant than what we think about ourselves. The diagram below illustrates how I have developed Jenkins' analytical framework in relation to how gay men construct and manage their gay identity in the workplace.

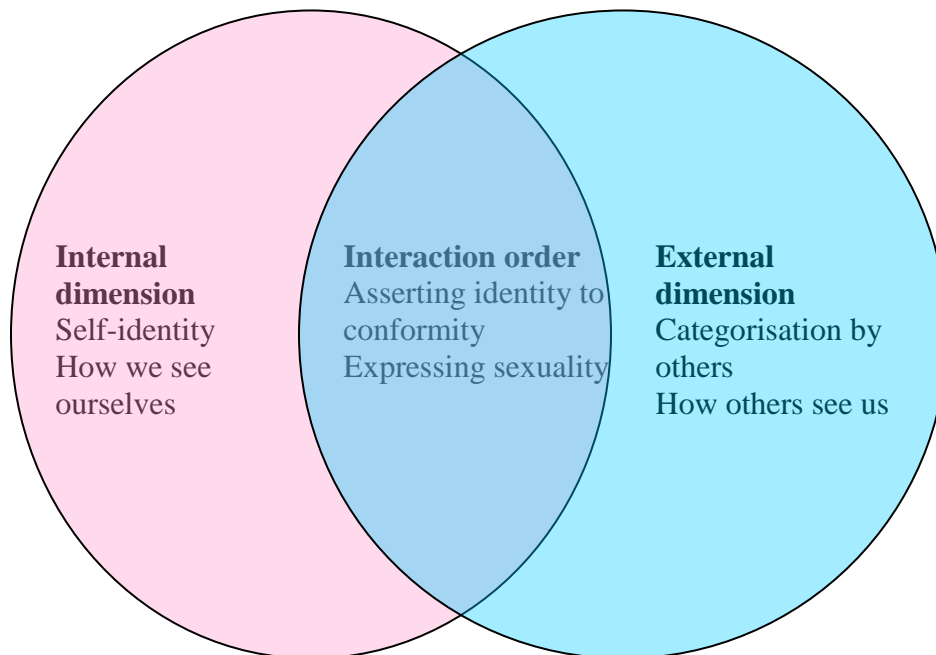


Figure 4: The intersection of internal and external dimensions of identity.

This chapter focuses on a specific area of Jenkins' interaction order, namely, how gay men in my sample construct their gay identity at the boundaries. The boundaries are where the internal identities meet the external identities. As illustrated in the Venn diagram above this is where the internal and external dimensions of social identities intersect. It is here where the boundaries may be pushed between the individual's interpretation of self-identity and that ascribed by others. In many respects, I would interpret the analytical framework that Jenkins uses to describe the interaction order as like two shifting plates; one plate the internal dimension and the other the external dimension. The aim of this chapter is to explore the degree to which my sample of gay men is on the one hand willing to push their interpretation of their self-identity and on the other to allow the perceived ascriptions and categorisations by others to prevail.

The diagram illustrates the ways in which identities are fluid and contextual. These shifting plates are in constant flux. In relation to gay men, the meaning attached to a gay identity may change over time. This fluidity arises because within the interaction order identities may be fought over and contested. As Jenkins (2008:45) argues, identification is something over which struggles take place and with which stratagems are advanced. Consequently, I aim to explore the ways in which my sample of gay men have contested, fought or conformed to the meanings they perceive as attached to their gay identity. Given recent changes in social attitudes to sexuality, (Ellison and Gunstone, 2009; Cowan, 2007) combined with legislation such as the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, my aim is to go beyond the issue of disclosure/non-disclosure of sexuality which has very much dominated most research in the past twenty years (Humphrey 1999; Griffith and Hebl 2002; Day and Schoenrade 2000) in what I classify as the first wave of research on sexual minorities. In light of more liberal social attitudes towards homosexuality combined with recent legislation, I aim to explore whether gay men have taken advantage of this new context. In so doing I aim to explore whether gay men feel they can be more assertive or possibly more willing to stamp their identity in the workplace in order to move the boundaries or plates within the interaction order towards their own interpretation of their identity. This is particularly relevant as recent research has indicated that more than two-thirds of gay men in employment in the

U.K. now feel they can be open about their sexual orientation in the workplace (Ellison and Gunstone, 2009:80). In so doing I aim to answer one of my key research questions namely:

- How do gay men work upon, challenge, conform to, modify and resist the identities, labels and stereotypes ascribed by others?

In order to answer the above question, I aim to illustrate the interactions with work colleagues and customers that my sample of gay men has experienced through stories, episodes and incidents from the workplace. The focus of this chapter will be primarily on how the gay men in my sample managed their identity in the interaction order rather than how they felt they were perceived or the categorisation and ascriptions by others. This was the focus of the previous chapter.

The following themes drawn from the interviews will be analysed in relation to the interaction order:

- (i) From asserting self-identity to conformity
- (ii) Expressing sexuality

8.2. From asserting self-identity to conformity

A theme drawn from the data was that a variety of strategies were used by my sample of self-identified gay men in how they managed their gay identity in the interaction order. The approaches adopted ranged from direct confrontational self-assertion strategies (in a minority of cases, 8 respondents) to passive acceptance or compliance to the categorisation by others. These findings seem to resonate with Boykin and Toms' research (1985) where they observed the various coping strategies that African Americans used in managing their identity. One aspect they identified is the active-passive dimension, which refers to the degree to which an individual is willing to aggressively challenge others. Similarly, my findings seem to follow similar patterns to Wilson and Miller (2002:389) in which they found a continuum of coping strategies ranging from passive, accepting heteronormative attitudes, to active, direct challenges aimed at altering the status quo. The diagram above is a development of Wilson and Miller's concept of passive/active adding a more comprehensive range of coping strategies. Similarly, Snape et al (1995) identify an active to passive dimension to responses to discrimination. They define a passive response as one in which an individual ignores discriminatory behaviour, whereas an active response is where a gay man would reply to verbal abuse making the discriminator aware that their behaviour was unacceptable.

The following sub sections explore the different strategies used by my sample of gay men as identified in the diagram above including: normalising a gay identity, confrontational approaches and conformity. It should be stated that none of these strategies were mutually exclusive. Rather they were dependent on work context.

8.2.1. Normalising a gay identity

Although none of these strategies were mutually exclusive, rather than challenge stereotypes and labels head on, a preferred, more subtle strategy favoured by a large proportion of respondents (18 respondents) was an attempt to normalise their gay

identity. These strategies were not mutually exclusive in the sense that they were dependent on a number of contingency factors. Nor were these strategies linear in the sense that an individual did not start at a passive conformist position and move gradually towards an active confrontational position later in their working life. This will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. As in Creed and Scully's (2000) research on gay and lesbian activists, my respondents tried to normalise their gay identity by taking a casual matter of fact approach when discussing personal details about themselves. In the cases of Don, Hans and Morris, they felt that just 'being themselves' on a day-to-day basis would allow work colleagues to get to know them and consequently change their assumptions about what gay men are like as well as what it means to be gay. In these cases, the fact that they were 'out' in the workplace meant that they felt able to challenge and change the perceptions and attitudes of what others perceived a gay man to be. This was particularly so where work colleagues had never knowingly come into contact with gay colleagues before. Typical examples that highlight this approach drawn from the interviews come from Don and Morris.

'I like to change attitudes by just being myself, cos I think the people I'm close to, their attitudes will change as they get to know me or as they get to know other gay people and the people who don't know me will probably hang onto their stereotypes or whatever.' Don, 43, gardener 'out' in present organisation.

Equally Morris felt that he was a pioneer as the first openly gay teacher in his primary school. Simply by being 'out' in the workplace according to Morris was an education to others.

'If I've educated anybody, I'm not sure how to put it. It's just been by them knowing me and seeing me. And I think there are people, who like I say, probably haven't known gay people, haven't worked with gay people and perhaps who've from working with me have realised that you know, what does it matter?' Morris, 33, primary school teacher, 'out' in present organisation.

In many respects, the above quote highlights how by being openly gay to other members of staff had reduced any stigma or perceived difference. He therefore feels that his gay identity no longer matters. Creed and Scully (2000:396) refer to this approach as a

claiming encounter. This is where an individual portrays their gay identity in a casual matter of fact way. Morris's stance as with the vast majority of respondents highlighted below could be categorised as an assimilationist approach. Like the early rights campaigners in the 1970s in the U.K. and the U.S. as Young (1990:160) notes, the objective was to de-stigmatise homosexuality. The strategy was to downplay a gay identity as being no different from anyone else. Morris felt that by openly disclosing his sexuality that over time others would not see him as 'different'.

Similarly, Dean, a police officer, who was the lesbian and gay liaison officer (LAGLO) took a liberal assimilationist approach. He felt that sexuality should not be used to mark difference. He felt uncomfortable with the images portrayed on the LAGLO website as it emphasised their difference which he felt did not 'fit in' with the corporate image.

'I have just taken over our internal website and the first thing that struck me was that an awful lot of it was in pink and there were like rainbow pictures and I was just trying to think about what image that gives within a professional organisation about all our stuff on the internet being different from the corporate blandness if you like. it's for a start doesn't fit in with the corporate template of what things should be and also I think sometimes when we use imagery like that we sort of set ourselves apart as we're different because we're gay. Whereas a lot of my take on things is that we're not different just because we're gay.' Dean, police officer.

In the quote above, Dean refers to fitting in with the corporate template. Dean's approach seems to be one of conformity. Rather than aspiring to mark difference he feels that the LAGLO networking website should use the organisational culture as a template to emulate. Of course by adopting this stance, the rules have already been set by others and arguably the heterosexual majority. Implicit in Dean's sentiments is the notion of fitting into heteronormative assumptions of how non-heterosexual people should behave and present themselves.

Likewise, Andrew, 41, who worked in an international bank used a strategy of sameness when attempting to educate a heterosexual male work colleague who initially reacted negatively to Andrew's sexuality.

'...like with the guy that was very homophobic and really didn't want to know me and didn't want to talk to me. Basically through getting to know me and educating him that, I am no different from anyone else that helps.' Andrew, 41

Other respondents noticed that by adopting a 'visible approach' of being openly gay in the workplace had changed people's attitudes over time. Louis recounted his experience of running his own pub with his partner to a predominately heterosexual clientele and how they managed to overcome initial resistance during the early months of establishing the business.

'I remember one guy who actually did say to us, we'd been there about four months. It wasn't to me, it was to my partner. He pulled him to one side one day, shook his hand, and said, when you came here I didn't want poofs in this town. I didn't want poofs in this pub, but you've proven me wrong and I want to shake your hand for that because you're just like everybody else. You're just normal and I like you a lot and you've changed my attitude completely. And that meant a lot to us. I mean without even trying that happened. In terms of sitting down and trying to educate somebody or try and change someone's opinion, no. We had to let them do it themselves.' Louis, 32, Pub landlord, 'out' in previous organisation.

In the above quote, Louis highlights how a customer perceived his partner and himself as 'normal' and as 'just like everybody else.' I would argue that the customer was judging 'normality' against a norm of male heterosexual behaviour. In many respects, the terms sameness and difference are inter-dependent. As feminist theorists Liff and Wajcman (1999:80) point out, one can only be different in so far as one is not the same as the other.

Similar findings were uncovered by Wilson and Miller (2002) in their research on African American gay and bisexual men. They argue that claiming visibility was the key to challenging heterosexism. The majority of respondents had noticed a shift in attitudes from work colleagues in their perception of gay men and themselves in a favourable direction over their working lives. These findings seem to resonate with previous research in the U.S. where Creed and Scully (2000) found that individuals can effect social changes within the organisation simply by revealing their sexuality. Similarly, Peel (2002:255) argues that the exposure of others to openly gay men can break down people's fears and prejudices. It seems that within the interaction order, those who were

‘out’ were able to push the boundary of their interpretation of their self-identity and as a result seemingly modify the perceptions of others. What seems apparent from the responses of the majority of openly gay respondents was that the issue of disclosure/non-disclosure of sexual identity had moved on to one of normalising homosexuality. Hans, 59, observed that being an openly gay man had helped others in the workplace accept gay people as totally ordinary, ‘normal’ people. Reflecting on his experience as an EFL teacher, Hans believed that working with a gay man had

‘been an education for them [heterosexual colleagues], not a direct one, but an indirect one and I think I have done my bit in that part in that way.’ Hans, 59, EFL teacher, ‘out’ in his present organisation.

Woods and Lucas (1993:181) discovered from their research of professional gay men in the U.S. that their respondents were normalising their sexual identity on heterosexual terms by downplaying differences between gay and heterosexual lifestyles. In a similar vein, Creed and Scully (2000) noted how respondents in their study would share everyday life stories and experiences in order to find commonality with their heterosexual counterparts. Respondents in my findings were adopting a similar strategy in an attempt to ‘normalise’ their gay identity. This approach is reinforced by the sentiments expressed by Callum, 29, a regional bank manager.

‘I think I have de-sensitised them to the fact that I’m quite brash about it. I just speak to everyone as if it’s normal, because it is normal to me.’ Callum, 29, regional bank manager, ‘out’ in present organisation.

In the above quote, Callum feels he can be ‘quite brash’ in the sense that he believes he can be more forthright and open in the way he manages his gay identity. Even so, the strategy is one of assimilation. His goal of ‘de-sensitising’ his work colleagues is an attempt to prove himself, as Young (1990) argues, against rules and standards that have already been set. In interaction with work colleagues, he attempts to normalise his gay identity.

Similarly, Nigel, 29, a secondary school chemistry teacher noted how being an 'out' gay man at school had changed pupils' attitudes towards gay men. Nigel expressed with pride one example that had happened recently.

'One comment does stick particularly in mind, he's leaving this year, I do get on very well with him actually, he's a nice kid, he has lots of behavioural issues and he said that you have actually changed. I used to have problems with gay men, but I don't have a problem with you. So there have actually been definitely positive comments from students that I've helped introduce them to a sort of, yeah gay men in a non threatening way.' Nigel, 29, Secondary school teacher, 'out' in present organisation.

Within the interaction order, normalising a gay identity was the most popular strategy adopted by those who were openly gay at work in the workplace. What is revealing is this approach was deemed less threatening as if a more forthright, direct approach would be deemed too confrontational and imposing on the attitudes of others. In Nigel's case he saw limits in the extent to which he felt he could push the boundaries between his self-identity and the attitudes and perceptions of others. A compounding factor in Nigel's case was that he had lived under the shadow of section 28 (see section 2.8 on legislation), where he still feared that any discussion around homosexuality within the classroom might lead to concerns being raised by parents or pupils that he was promoting homosexuality. Although Nigel was comfortable with his students knowing his sexuality, he was unwilling to go any further or discuss the issue in the classroom. Jenson, 40, a finance processing manager, expressed similar feelings. Jenson felt it was appropriate to present his gay identity in a subtle way as long as you do not preach or force people to accept your standpoint. There seemed to be a fine line between an attempt to normalise a gay identity and pushing the boundaries too far. This resonates with the sentiments of Don.

'Unless you are going to make a big fuss and scene every time [there is a homophobic incident], which I think in the long run will alienate more people than if you just keep a low profile as it were. I don't mean be a shrinking violet always but sometimes if you bang on a drum and make a lot of fuss, you alienate people towards the gay issue probably more.' Donald, 43, gardener, 'out' at work.

Nevertheless, this normalisation strategy was successful in modifying people's perceptions and stereotypes of what others perceived were the attributes of a gay man. Ivan, 43, noted how he felt he had changed his subordinates' view of gay people since he took over as manager of a factory.

'They do say, you know, until I met you, I didn't know, I thought gay people were a bit strange and weird and they say, you're not camp and that. I say even if they are a bit camp and flamboyant it doesn't mean that they are any worse or any better than me. And they go, oh yeah, we know that, we know that now.' Ivan, 43, operations manager of a factory, 'out' in present organisation.

Some respondents educated others in the workplace in a traditional way that is a more formal teacher to student approach. In this way the respondents took on the role of educator. This approach resonates with Woods and Lucas' research (1993:184) where gay men would often take on the role of instructor when the subject of homosexuality was raised. Creed and Scully (2000) classify this form of disclosure as an educative encounter, where a gay man would challenge myths and stereotypes as well as highlight social injustices around sexual orientation. Probably the most public display of this was when Andrew, 41, was invited on stage at a mandatory diversity training course a week before I interviewed him to share his experiences of being gay. The value of this event was that it enabled others to see the world from a gay man's perspective. Andrew recalled the positive feedback he had from co-workers, some of whom expressed how it had made them realise the problems gay people face throughout their lives. In some cases, the personal stories Andrew recounted created a tearful reaction. In this sense, sharing his experiences as a gay man had had a profound effect on members of the audience and he felt probably changed the ways in which they viewed Andrew thereafter. By recounting his story and experiences as a gay man Andrew indirectly challenged the perceptions, values and perspectives of other employees in his workplace. Of course, in Andrew's case he was able to assert his identity through education primarily because he had significant support from his organisation, a recognised diversity champion combined with an established LGBT network. Equally, Neal, 27, employed a similar strategy. In Neal's case this was probably because of his dual role as manager of a small team in addition to being co-chair of a LGBT group within the bank. He would feel a need on occasion to

educate his subordinates. He would correct subordinates when they used the wrong terminology to address gay men or used expected stereotypes. An example of this was where a work colleague asked him who's the man or a woman in a gay relationship.

'Well, actually it's not the case of being a man or woman. You know, in my mind I'm with a man because I'm gay and which I'm a man in a relationship. You know, that's it. You don't have a man, you have two men.....you're applying a heterosexual relationship and heterosexual make-up into a gay one, which you can't do.' Neal, 27, senior operations supervisor in a bank, 'out' at work.

Unlike the previous examples illustrated earlier, here Neal tries to assert his difference from his heterosexual colleagues rather than finding commonality. Neal tries to differentiate his gay identity. My findings would seem to concur with Clair et al's (2003) generalised theoretical model on managing an invisible social identity, where they argue that one strategy gay men might use is 'differentiating' in order to present an identity as equally as valid as a heterosexual one. Neal attempts to change the perceptions and behaviours of co-workers by making them aware of a gay existence and its differences.

For some such as Nigel, the fact that he was an openly gay man in a secondary school led to other staff members defining him as an advisor on sexuality and equality issues. This was a role that he did not wish to adopt. Nigel did not want to be seen as spokesperson for his identity group rather he wanted to normalise his sexuality within the school.

'The only time I have got annoyed with staff, [was when] they seem to refer gay issues to me. They seem to refer issues to do with sexuality and in terms of equality within the workplace and stuff. They seem to refer to me just because I'm a gay man.' Nigel, 29, Secondary school teacher, 'out' in present organisation

This normalisation strategy as mentioned above was primarily achieved simply by being 'out' and in some cases being a pioneer. Some respondents reflected on the subliminal messages that this approach had created. The consequence of this was that other gay employees saw them as role models due to them being openly gay in senior positions within the organisation. Callum, for example, mentioned how a junior member of staff first 'came out' to him and then to his work colleagues before he even disclosed his

sexual identity to his family and friends. Callum recalls with some pride how this apprentice now refers to him as his *older role model*. These findings seem to concur with Ragins and Cornwall (2001), who discovered that where openly gay individuals were present it enabled others to disclose their sexuality. Similarly, Woods and Lucas (1993:221) found that many gay professionals could identify a gay peer who had facilitated the process of their 'coming out' in the workplace.

Although it was not a planned theme in my interview guide, it was quite revealing that more than a quarter of respondents had taken work colleagues to gay bars and venues. This illustrates the various strategies gay men are willing to use in seeking to achieve validation of their gay identity in the workplace. The issue of gay bars and work colleagues has had scant discussion in previous research. Again this was an indirect form of education that in some cases had changed the attitudes and perceptions of gay men that co-workers had previously had. Paradoxically perhaps, taking work colleagues to gay bars enables the building of friendships between gay men and heterosexual people. According to Rumens (2008b:83) friendships give gay men the opportunity to shape a sense of identity that counters dominant heteronormative assumptions of sexuality. Simon, 42, for example, who is a senior director at the highest level of a retail chain, mentioned how he had noticed a discernable shift in one of his close work colleague's attitudes towards gay men partly through being introduced to the gay scene.

'We joke with him that he used to be a homophobe and that we brought him such a long way that he's practically gay now. And he's not. He's a married man with two kids. The first time we all went to a gay bar he was clearly very uncomfortable with it. And he was just uncomfortable in the sense not probably used to having 2 or 3 gay people around him at work. But we take pride in the fact that Phil is now an honorary gay man. I joke with him that he has been to more gay bars in the last 12 months than I have!' Simon, 42, senior director of a large retail chain, 'out' in present organisation.

Consequently normalising strategies can serve a range of purposes. In Simon's case, it was an unintentional one. The visits to gay venues that Simon initiated had primarily been about building closer bonds and friendships with work colleagues rather than changing his attitudes towards his sexuality. For Nigel and Callum claiming visibility

was not about being trail-blazers on behalf of their identity group, but rather as a means of normalising their homosexuality. Nevertheless, it had unintentionally made them role models in the eyes of their gay subordinates. In the vast majority of these normalising approaches there did not appear to be a political level as identified by Humphrey (1999). Humphrey argued that one motive for 'coming out' was to educate individuals about a non heterosexual existence to effect social change. Creed and Scully (2000) refer to this approach as an advocacy approach, where individuals seek address through organisational policy or change in attitudes. There did not appear to be such a deliberate strategy to effect social change in my findings. In the case of Humphrey's (1999) study, she conducted her research solely with 23 activists. This might explain why her respondents were more strident and political in their approach. This contrasts with my respondents who in the vast majority of cases were not gay activists. My respondents just wanted to get on with their lives without making a big fuss over the sexuality in the workplace.

8.2.2. Confrontational approach

In this continuum of coping strategies, probably the most assertive challenge came from Stuart, 41, a mental health support worker. Stuart's story was probably the most confrontational. This was evident not only in how Stuart expressed his anger through rather strong language, but how the story dominated the interview. Although Stuart's approach was probably atypical among the respondents I interviewed, his story illustrates the way in which he was determined to push the boundaries within the interaction order. Stuart recalled an incident where one day he was cutting up some fruit in the staff kitchen, when another male staff nurse teased him that it must be for 'fruity Stuart'. In light of the fact that the perpetrator, according to Stuart, had a history of making homophobic comments to other members of staff, Stuart wished to take matters further through official channels with the aid of a witness, even though from a third party perspective, these comments seemed rather innocuous.

'I'm a fucking gay man. I immediately think he's making some kind of comment against me. So anyway Liz was like (He shows an open mouthed expression of shock) stared at him, you know, I'm in the room, like I say, I heard him and then we both made statements [to management].' Stuart, 41, mental health nurse, 'out' in present organisation.

This story illustrates the ways in which, according to Jenkins (2008:45) identification is about struggles and negotiation. In Stuart's case he was able to fight his interpretation of his gay identity so strongly that he managed to have the alleged offender removed from his unit. During the interview I asked him if he still worked with the alleged perpetrator. He responded:

'No, he's not allowed. Well, I was actually told once at a meeting with my ward manager. You know, we will still have him on the unit. I said you fucking won't! I went mad. I went completely mad, swearing, screaming, top of my voice and believe me I've got some gob. And I went fucking nuts at her. And she was like, well I need to follow this up. But because I came on shift one day and he comes walking in bold as brass! I went I am fucking going home. I phoned the HR department and there was like oh, you need to go down the road with your line manager first. I went there's no fucking point. What's the point? I went I am walking off shift if they have him on this unit. I went this is so fucking insensitive. I went mad at her and she was like right okay leave it with me and then he was sent over to another unit and then that was it then. I don't know what he was told but he would not be working anymore on the unit I worked on.'

Probably the key issue in Stuart's story centres round power. His story can be very much defined as a struggle to stamp his self-identity in the workplace. Probably due to a number of contextual factors including a supportive union and a large openly gay presence in his organisation Stuart was able to assert his gay identity and challenge the status quo. Stuart took advantage of the fact that he had these support mechanisms in place giving him the impetus to address any negative comments.

Previous research suggests that those who are in higher incomes tend not to disclose their sexual identity as they have more to lose, never mind challenge homophobic abuse (Schope, 2002:11). My findings seem to be in direct contrast and confirm Brekhus' U.S. findings (2003:132) that those in higher income jobs have more freedom in the management of their gay identity in the workplace. A theme that emerged from the

interviews was that there was a strong link between the level of seniority in the organisation and the degree to which an individual was willing to challenge homophobic remarks in an assertive manner. This was the case for Ivan, 43, Isaac, 41, Jenson, 40, Simon, 42 and Sam, 46 all of whom worked in senior management positions. This is in spite of a recent survey where 40 per cent of respondents stated they would be unhappy with an openly gay manager at work (Ellison and Gunstone, 2009:80). Probably one of the worst examples of homophobic abuse was experienced by Ivan, who was employed as a trouble shooter to turn a poor performing, male dominated manufacturing company around. Ivan suffered a torrent of homophobic abuse from the shop floor workers. Ivan would challenge homophobic comments immediately in order to reduce any ensuing negative effects that might undermine his authority. As Ivan explained:

'I have had homophobic remarks at work in there, but you know I deal with it. I call them breeders'¹¹ oh okay. Oh sometimes they say oh, "gay Ivan" or "oh, hello sailor". They've said before and I say, "hi, breeder" back to them. Because I am kind of senior management in charge of my own side of things, it's kind of easier to deal with..... Yeah, yeah I used to hear it. Yes, yeah, I used to try to say I could hear you! If you've got anything to say, say it to me! And then their heads would go down and they'd disperse, wouldn't they? Nobody would confront me with it.'
Ivan, 43, operations manager, 'out' in present organisation.

This direct approach in the management of his gay identity draws parallels similar to the findings of Swim et al, (1998) and Hyers, (2007) in relation to women's responses to sexist behaviour, where the impression management goal was to avoid appearing defenceless and weak. Ivan's case was one of asserting control over his subordinates in the workplace as well as changing their attitudes towards him. His case was also a powerful self-assertion strategy. Ivan recalls how it took many months to assert control through a combination of direct confrontation and dismissal of unruly subordinates. In Ivan's situation, a pivotal moment was when he became suspicious of one of the workers who suddenly insisted on making him mugs of tea. Ivan discovered that this man was urinating into his mug as a form of protest. Ivan was able to use his position in order to get the perpetrator sacked. In many respects, Ivan's approach to challenging others with respect to his gay identity was a confrontational one. Nevertheless, the context of Ivan's

¹¹ A derogatory term used by some gay men to describe heterosexuals.

senior position in the organisation and the power that it held gave him the opportunity to push the boundaries within the interaction order. Ivan not only directly confronted the perpetrator but also put up resistance by taking a few days off work in order to force the owner of the factory to side with him. Without the support of the factory owner, Ivan would probably not have succeeded in wresting control. Similar stories of confrontation were uncovered in Woods and Lucas's research (1993) amongst senior openly gay professionals.

In a similar vein, Simon, 41, reflected upon how his level of seniority gave him the power to challenge homophobic comments in the workplace, which would not have been possible if he were in a more junior position.

'Because of my level of seniority now, whether it's internal or external I'm often one of the most important people in the room, so it would be very easy for me to stamp my authority on that sort of behaviour and I would! If I ever had cause to confront that sort of behaviour I would have absolutely no hesitation whatsoever in doing it, but part of my confidence probably comes from the fact that it comes from the level of my seniority and if I were younger, less senior, starting out, less confident about all of that I guess you'd behave differently, but certainly I actually think that because of where I'm at I would have a responsibility to stamp on that and to use my authority to make that unacceptable wherever I encountered it and I would be happy to do so for that reason. I would be more than happy to fight it.' Simon, 41, senior director of a large retail chain, 'out' in present organisation.

Equally, Jenson, 40, realised that it was his position that allowed him to challenge the behaviour of his subordinates in relation to issues around sexuality. Jenson recalled an incident where an Indian colleague talked about the tragic death of a famous, gay celebrity. When she mentioned the word 'gay' she would use a hushed voice. Jenson rebuked her, questioning why she could not say the word 'gay' out loud. He related that it would be equivalent to him lowering his voice in saying the word 'Indian'. In this example, Jenson was comparing his own potentially discreditable sexual identity with her minority ethnic identity and at the same time challenging the perceived stigma attached to homosexuality that she held.

My sample of gay men included a cluster of six who were in the education sector including, primary, secondary and EFL teachers. All of these respondents were 'out' in varying degrees to colleagues and in some cases to students as well. This is in stark contrast to earlier research. Schope (1991:9) noted from a Gay Life survey in 1978 that the teaching profession in the U.S. was the most closeted with more than half the respondents stating that they were not 'out' to anyone at work. Thirteen years later, Griffin's (1991) research in the U.S. drew similar findings, where all thirteen self-identified gay and lesbian teachers in the sample were unwilling to publicly identify their sexuality for fear of losing their job or loss of credibility with work colleagues and pupils. More recently, Colgan et al (2008:38) in their research on the experiences of lesbian women in the workplace in the U.K. revealed that the majority were not 'out' at work as they feared the reactions of pupils and parents. In addition, Ellison and Gunstone (2009) discovered that 39 per cent in their survey would not choose teaching because of their sexuality. Interestingly, in my study some of the most strident challenges to heteronormativity came from teachers. This may be because they felt that they had a duty to challenge homophobic comments as part of their role as educators, but equally, as discussed above, challenging was necessary in order to maintain authority in the classroom. Nigel, 29 and Pablo, 31 had similar experiences of homophobic abusive comments by their pupils. What was critical in both these incidents was that there were effective institutional support mechanisms in place that allowed Nigel and Pablo to address homophobic abuse. As Nigel recounts:

'I wasn't actually teaching them at the time but they were removed from another lesson and put in my classroom whilst I was teaching at which point one of them piped up and said, you're a fucking faggot, aren't you? To me.....I looked just astonished to hear that. I'm sorry what did you say? And he repeated it to me and I said I'm gonna leave the room now cos I don't want to be in the classroom with you. And the other one said I don't particularly want to be in the classroom with a queer either. So at which point I just went straight out the classroom, got my head of department, got Jack, he's the deputy head to deal with him. And they dealt with it very effectively. One was actually permanently excluded, but not just for that incident, but because of a catalogue of incidents and the other one was excluded for one week and put on a very tight protocol when he came back, reintegrated back into the school.' Nigel, 29, secondary school teacher, 'out' in present organisation.

The shift in identity management styles shown by Nigel and Pablo to a more assertive approach, compared to previous studies done in the U.S. more than twenty years ago, is probably due to these support mechanisms. Unlike their American predecessors they did not fear losing their jobs or loss of credibility with their work colleagues.

8.2.3. Conformity

As discussed above, a continuum of approaches were deployed within the interaction order from active (direct challenges) to passive (conformity). A theme that arose from the data was that some respondents were willing to conform to the heterosexual norms and expectations of others in the workplace. Rather than challenge disparaging identity labels imposed by others, there was a degree of acceptance. Peter condoned derogatory labels imposed by others as the perpetrators were deemed as being not deliberately vicious or nasty. Peter accepted a certain level of homophobia as he felt that the labels were not intended as homophobic. The social context in which Peter worked as an electrician, a blue collar occupation, in a male dominated environment was probably a contributing factor that may have put pressure on him to comply and condone the derogatory ascriptions of others in the workplace.

‘When I’m with contractors and mates sort of, oh, ‘her’, ‘she’, you know. ‘She’s one of them’ or it’s silly very old fashioned type, kind of, but I wouldn’t have found it offensive or anything else. I think in a way it’s kind of said in the way that they were brought up and the kind of age group.....it’s not necessarily that they’re.....[homophobic]....I don’t say they are doing anything wrong.’ Peter, 35, electrician, not ‘out’ at work.

In many respects they were conforming to the dominant heteronormative discourses¹² by the very fact that they condoned the use of such labelling and accepted low level homophobic behaviour. In these cases, within the interaction order, the contested meaning over a gay identity seemed to lean towards the meanings ascribed by others. The

¹² In the context of this chapter, dominant heteronormative discourse is defined from the sexuality in organizations perspective (Burrell and Hearn, 1989, Pringle, 1989) where informal interactions amongst co-workers assume heterosexuality and stigmatize homosexuality.

shifting plates within the boundary of the interaction order moved in favour of the meanings ascribed by others. Kris's comments below highlight the typical sentiments obtained from a significant number of respondents.

'And it's gay friendly, but they rip the piss out of me. They call me faggot, flamer or what have you. But there's no malice behind it.' Kris, 30, taxi driver, 'out' in present organisation.

In Kris's case he did not 'see' the term faggot and flamer as terms of homophobic abuse. This is despite the commonly held assumption that these words are of derogatory nature and are defined as such in most dictionaries.¹³

In George's case, such derogatory terms were inverted and adopted as a label of pride, similar to the way in which the term queer had been embraced by a number of gay activists in the U.S. in the early 1990s (Jagose, 1996:76).

'Someone will go, someone will turn round to me and say faggot. I say, Miss Faggot to you! Yeah, I always throw something back and it's just banter. They'll come back with something else and I'll come back with something else, but I don't see it as derogatory because it's not meant to be derogatory. They don't mean anything by it.' George, 44, bus driver, 'out' in present organisation.

Although there is a degree of compliance by perceiving such labels as not being derogatory, George deploys an assertive strategy reclaiming and embracing these terms ascribed by his co-workers to give them a new meaning as a badge of pride. George refashioned such derogatory terms on his own terms. This is a good example of how the plates are constantly in flux. George's story illustrates the way in which struggles take place over the contested meanings assigned to identities.

A number of respondents justified such labelling as *'it's all meant in good taste and not in an offensive way.'* (George, 44). In the case of Louis 32, Michael, 50 and George, 44, they argued that because they had been identified by these labels throughout their

¹³ *Faggot*, often shortened to *fag*, is a pejorative term and common homophobic slur used chiefly in North America against homosexual males. Its pejorative use has spread from the United States to varying extents elsewhere in the English-speaking world through mass culture, including movies, music, and the internet. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin. (2000)

working lives, they had consequently accepted them. Similarly, when work colleagues used labels such as *'poof'* to describe Donald, he would not interpret it as offensive or discriminatory. He would put it down to typical banter. Likewise, Robert, 46, was told by one of his subordinates, a 'born again' Christian, that he was going to hell because of his sexuality. Although the comments were audibly heard by other members of staff, yet again, the story was of condoning the accuser's actions as *'she didn't mean it in a nasty way'*. These respondents allowed the meanings of others to prevail within the interaction order.

A theme identified from respondents (expressed by eight interviewees) was that they did not wish to directly challenge forms of discrimination in the workplace. Neal, 27, for example, whilst serving customers at a leading supermarket convenience store in 2004, experienced verbal homophobic abuse from work colleagues' children. Eventually, the tirade of abuse over a two month period led to Neal having to take time off work due to stress. It could be argued that by taking time off work Neal was putting up some form of resistance against the abuse he had received. Ivan also adopted a similar strategy of resistance after confronting a subordinate who allegedly had urinated into his mug. Ivan took a few days off as a means of putting pressure on the owner of the factory to get the matter resolved. What is interesting about Neal's case was how organisational context had had a significant impact on his identity management. In this occupation working in a convenience supermarket, Neal was unwilling to articulate a challenge to homophobic remarks. Control and the imposition of identity labels were very much out of his hands. The context was one in which there was little support from work colleagues, all of whom took a blind eye to the torrent of abuse he was receiving. The contrast with his next job could not be more striking. Working in an international bank with a strong culture of diversity, he felt he could be more assertive and challenge identity labels ascribed by others. This seems to reflect earlier research in the U.S. (Chrobot-Mason et al 2001; Griffith and Hebl 2002) where it was found there was a strong link between a perceived supportive environment and the ways in which gay men managed their identity in the workplace. The impact of the organisational context was analysed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

Like Neal's reaction, a number of interviewees did not want to antagonise the situation or '*make a scene*' (Donald, 43) in front of others. A common coping strategy when confronted with homophobic discourse in the workplace was to ignore it in the hope that it would deflect attention away from themselves. This strategy was predominantly used by respondents who tried to hide their sexual identity (Daniel, 38, Pat 52, Roland 63). Daniel, for example, recalled how a pregnant co-worker expressed the hope that her baby did not turn out gay. In order to avoid the spotlight being focused on himself, he decided it was best to keep quiet and let the comment go unchallenged. Similarly, Roland justified his silence when a fellow architect commented that 'all gays should be put up against the wall and shot' as the comment was not directed at him personally. These cases illustrate the ways in which some respondents were willing to comply or conform to the meanings created by others in the way they managed their gay identity in the workplace. Andrew's story was a good example of this. He was asked whether he had a boyfriend during an interview for an internal post in his present organisation:

"I said, "I hadn't got [a boyfriend] but I'm gay." And he said, "Oh, you know, I just thought I needed to double check" and he said, "Because you will be, you know, working night shifts with a group of lads who you know, the conversation can get a bit blue, unPC, they might rib you a bit and take the piss." And I said, "I was fine with that."" Andrew, 41, systems change coordinator in a bank, 'out' at work.

In this example, Andrew was under pressure to conform in how he managed his identity in the workplace if he were to be successful in his application for the internal post. Furthermore, the interviewer had made Andrew's sexuality the problem in fitting in with the other employees rather than the problem being the other work colleagues' values and attitudes towards a sexuality which was different from their own. In addition, the interviewer was condoning the possibility that co-workers might make fun of his sexuality and Andrew was seemingly willing to consent. Andrew's story illustrates the way in which some respondents felt required to conform due to organisational pressure in order to be accepted within the organisation. Roy 47, Alex, 34 and Stefan, 40 all experienced pressure to conform when faced with displays of hegemonic heterosexual

masculinity in the workplace. Alex, for example, working in an all male environment as a fencing contractor, would feel obliged to join in with the heterosexual male banter in order to conceal his identity.

'If you were 'out', because they would, every building site does it, you know, they take the mickey out of somebody, and if you were gay I am sure they would take the mickey out for being that.....you just take it on the chin. It's just banter. Cos nobody else is going to believe them, you know. I think everyone, I think every site I've worked on they always take the mickey out of someone for being gay and they're not, so who's to say I am and who's to say I am not.' Alex, 34, fencing contractor for Ministry of Defence.

Similarly, Stefan would use the term 'gay' in a disparaging way as a means of policing hegemonic masculinity. Effeminate behaviour or deviance from the norm would be ridiculed through banter. Again, like Alex, working in a predominately male environment and in a blue collar occupation were probably contributing factors that put pressure on Stefan to conform to the heterosexual male banter. My respondents' experiences of working in blue collar employment seems to concur with Collinson and Collinson's (1989) research, where they noted the powerful pressures to conform to a particular form of male heterosexuality.

'There's a lot of laughing and joking about it and we take the mickey out of people who are straight and that at work and things like that saying they're gay. No, we have a good time, good banter, a good bunch of guys, we've got..... If you've got red hair and things like that. We just take the mickey out of them and the way that they act, but we know they're straight because we've met their wives and things like that so.' Stefan, 40, Logistics manager of a haulage company, not 'out' in present organisation.

8.3. Expressing sexuality

Within this theme I aimed to explore the degree to which gay men felt able to express their sexuality within the workplace. Previous research has revealed the extent in which Cockburn (1991) argues organisations are 'profoundly heterosexualised' or as Burrell and Hearn (1989:21) state '*heterosexuality and heterosexual relations are the dominant forms*

in most organizations.' Similarly, Pringle (1989) notes how day-to-day life in organisations is relentlessly heterosexual. Hearn (1985) argues that explicit displays of sexuality in the workplace in most organisations are in the majority of cases heterosexual. DeJordy (2008) questions the norms and values in organisations where heterosexuals may express their sexuality but sexual minorities may not. DeJordy cites an example where it might be deemed the norm for heterosexual employees to embrace and show affection to their wives and husbands in the company lobby, whereas gay men might refrain from such behaviour even though they have disclosed their sexual identity at work. Within the interaction order, I wished to explore whether gay men were willing to challenge or conform to the dominant displays or discourses of heterosexuality in the workplace. Given the changing social context of a more socially tolerant society with regards to homosexuality and recent legislation as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, I aimed to explore whether gay men felt they could be as equally expressive of their sexuality in the workplace as their heterosexual counterparts. An absence of any expression of sexuality however subtle would make any identity construction in the interaction order very moot. Without the oxygen to express a gay identity, such identity becomes very one dimensional. As Day and Schoenrade (1997) state:

'If the homosexual workers are not able to communicate a relevant part of their personal and social identities, true identification may not take place.' Day and Schoenrade (1997:150)

Interviewees reported blatant displays of male heterosexuality were evident for example pin-ups of semi-naked women on the walls of a number of establishments and, in one case, workers viewing 'straight' porn movies to ease the boredom during night-shifts. Such practices were more common for those who worked on the shop floor or who worked in skilled manual occupations (Clive, George, Ivan, Roy and Kris). Most of the respondents accepted the use of pin-ups as long as they equally had the right to put up pictures of semi-naked men, even though, in reality none of the respondents had actually done so. Ivan, 43, manager of a glass factory, saw no issue in the men putting up photos of female nudes. This was probably due to the fact that although the respondents did not share the same sexuality, they did have a common gender. Consequently displays of

naked women might not have been taken as a direct challenge to their identity as it might have been for the female workers. These findings seem to resonate with Collinson and Collinson's, (1989:95) research, where they interviewed sixty shop floor workers in a lorry producing factory. They identified a recurrent theme in which '*discourses about men's sexuality characterized everyday life and interactions on the shop floor*'. Collinson and Collinson observed the perceived normalcy or naturalness for men to talk explicitly about sexuality or more importantly heterosexuality. More than twenty years after Collinson and Collinson's study, it would seem that such displays of male heterosexuality are still common in certain types of workplace. Roy, 47, recounts the culture on the shop floor in his previous workplace:

'You know how people are on the shop floor. I mean, whenever the boss's secretary goes down there, they're saying come over and sit on my knee and wolf-whistling and all sorts of things.' Roy, 47, electronic technician, not 'out' in this organisation.

The dominant heterosexual male discourse meant that Roy felt isolated. He would avoid socialising with his work colleagues in order to avoid talk about sexual conquests. Furthermore, he would remain silent when such conversations arose in order to deflect attention towards his hidden sexuality. Nevertheless, Roy did protest against the display of pictures of naked women on the factory walls by arguing that it was not very professional. In Roy's case, the social context in which he worked made it very difficult for him to express his sexuality. He felt he could not talk about his partner or his private life. Moreover, the powerful pressure of dominant heterosexual discourse meant Roy felt he had to suppress any expression of his own sexuality. For example, colleagues on the shop floor would show pictures of semi-naked women and ask Roy his opinions of them. My findings here draw parallels with Collinson and Collinson's (1989) study, where they noted how male heterosexual discourse on the shop floor created a powerful pressure for others to conform.

'It was considered 'normal' and 'natural' for men to talk explicitly about sexuality. Failure to participate raised serious questions about the deviants' masculinity.' Collinson and Collinson (1989:95)

During the interviews all 45 respondents were asked whether they felt they could express their sexuality in the workplace. Some respondents (nine) moved the area of discussion on from expressing sexuality to conversations or incidents based around sex. Even though it was not a planned area of investigation the fact that it was raised by nearly one fifth of respondents demonstrated its significance in how they managed their gay identity. It is probably surprising that discourses around (homosexual) sex, a previously private domain, have become more pronounced particularly as Burrell and Hearn (1989:20) argue such explicit displays of sexuality in the workplace have tended to be heterosexual. In my study explicit sexual conversations were predominately reported by those working in male dominated blue collar occupations or in occupations such as nursing where there was a numerically large visible gay presence. My reading of the findings is that there are three key factors explaining why gay men would explicitly talk about sex in the workplace; first as a self-assertion strategy to counter the dominant heterosexual discourse in the workplace giving them a sense of liberation, second in tandem with the first, as a deliberate shock tactic to disrupt heteronormative assumptions and finally, as a form of entertainment to amuse co-workers. These factors will be discussed in more depth below.

On the first of these factors, my findings revealed that some respondents (nine) felt that it was equally justified for them to express their own sexuality openly at work especially when provoked and as a consequence challenge the dominant discourse. Kris, for example, pointed to the double standards that prevailed during downtime at the taxi office.

‘ If they are going, oh, look at that bird, nice tits, blah, blah, blah and I go look at him jogging around and there’ll be woah! So it’s double standard in a way. Cos they expect that they can go oh, look at her, big tits or taxi office speak, but if I said something like that it would be like, oh, come on!’ Kris, 30, Taxi driver, ‘out’ in present organisation.

The above story illustrates a recurrent theme drawn from the interviews, that is, the double standards in expressing sexuality. Heterosexual men were able to express their

sexuality freely and liberally, supported and sometimes encouraged by co-workers, whereas such expressions from gay work colleagues were reportedly received with disgust and disapproval. In a similar vein, Phil, 31, a stock controller in a warehouse, would assert his own sexual identity in conversations reflecting dominant heterosexual male discourses in the workplace, when co-workers would talk about women and invite his opinion.

'Well, I kind of said I am not interested. I can tell an attractive girl and stuff like that but yeah, the conversation is like, not that I'm not that, you know, it's like, she's attractive and not my type. I say she's missing a cock and she's got too much up top!' Phil, stock controller, 'out' in this workplace.

Likewise Stuart, a mental health nurse, would openly express his sexuality in order to make it clear to others, sometimes as a way of making his gay identity known to others.

'I mean a couple of guys there like would say something about football and I'd like [say] I'm not into football, I like watching the blokes. That's about it,' Stuart.

A theme from the data revealed how sexualised (heterosexual) banter, expressions of heterosexuality and joking amongst work colleagues were common practice. In many cases, the respondents were placed in an awkward situation, not knowing how to respond. Morris recalls an encounter with one of the other male primary school teachers:

'...he's straight, he's married and I think he's not found it difficult. He'll talk about girls, and I remember him giving me a lift somewhere once and driving past some pretty girl and doing the whole laddish thing about whoar! You know, look at her! I mean I didn't know what to say. I thought do you really expect me to say something? You know, there's some sort of inappropriateness about you doing that in front of me. Not that I am offended by it or anything, but you have kind of put me in a position where I can't really react.' Morris, 33, primary school teacher, 'out' in present organisation.

The story above illustrates what Pringle (1989) describes as the sexual normality of daily life in organisations being 'relentlessly heterosexual'. Morris' male co-worker was able to express his heterosexuality, reproducing what Dunne (1992:86) refers to as the '*pervasive discourse or ideology within most organisations, the common sense, 'taken-*

for-granted' pattern of "normal" adult living. In this example, the male colleague was able to freely express his heterosexuality whereas Morris felt a need to remain silent, allowing the dominant heterosexual discourse to prevail. In many respects, the story also illustrates the way in which Morris felt he needed to make his sexuality invisible.

Ivan, 43, Kris, 30 and Alex, 34, all in blue collar occupations, all noted how work colleagues had teased or joked about their sexuality in order to provoke a reaction. Ivan recalled an occasion when two workers at the factory put a semi-naked picture of man on his office wall. The action in many respects was a deliberate attempt to embarrass Ivan and possibly humiliate him. Ivan responded by taking it all in jest. A theme that emerged from the data was that a coping strategy used by some respondents in response to such attempts to embarrass or ridicule their sexuality was to try and shock the perpetrators. The aim of this tactic was not only to assert a gay identity but also as a means for not looking submissive in the eyes of others. George, 44, would deliberately use this tactic when the other bus drivers tried to embarrass him.

'I mean it's like the other day I got asked outright if I lick arse by a straight guy and I turned around and said yeah. He shut up and didn't say another word. If they ask me a direct question, I give them a direct answer, whether it's what they want to hear or not. I don't think he expected me to just come out with a straight yes, if you know what I mean.' George, 44, bus driver, 'out' in present organisation.

Kris, 30, would occasionally try to disrupt the dominant male heterosexual discourse primarily because he found the relentlessness of it annoying. He would thus introduce the odd gay reference to the conversation. He noted how this strategy silenced them as well as making them blush! Such interventions illustrate the ways in which gay men in my sample tried to assert their gay identity in the interaction order. Similar findings were uncovered by Woods and Lucas (1993:185) where respondents would give direct answers with regards to their sex lives in order to silence work colleagues. However, Woods and Lucas interpret this behaviour differently arguing that it is a means of normalising their identity rather than an assertion strategy. I would argue it is an assertion strategy as it is

not just a question of attempting to normalise a gay identity, but about asserting difference as a valid alternative to heterosexuality.

Equally some respondents (six) would try to shock other work colleagues not so much as a strategy to disrupt the dominant discourse but more as a form of entertainment. Hans' story is a typical example of this:

'I mean I would go up to those people that I know are extremely comfortable with my being a gay guy and I will tell them. They are usually women. They tend to be women more than men. I told Nicola, a girl who I work with yesterday that I got chucked into this orgy situation on Sunday. But I thought no, she's sixty-five, but I know she loves it. She likes that kinda thing. That kinda stuff. She's that kinda woman.' Hans, 59, EFL Teacher.

Alfred recalled a recent story similar to the one above in which he would deliberately try to shock as a form of entertainment:

Alfred: *I used to tell them what I used to get up to.*
SR: *So what do your colleagues think when you tell them these stories?*
Alfred: *Well they used to be quite amused really. They just think it's quite funny. You know, cos I was talking to George the other day. I said I was looking at flats and one that backed onto the gardens and I walked through the gardens into town and I happened to say I had been to the gardens a lot, but it's the first time I have ever been in daylight! And they all laughed and that so that's the sort of joke.*

Alfred, 62, probably felt a need to express his sexuality in this manner as a form of liberation having recounted how earlier in his life he had to repress any expression of his sexuality particularly when homosexuality was illegal.

These stories illustrate how in some social settings gay men are able to openly express their sexuality. Nevertheless, my findings revealed that this tended to be restricted to defined audiences. Even so, as Woods and Lucas (1993:216) research revealed in their sample of professional gay men, a concern that in expressing their sexuality openly was knowing the boundaries in order to maintain decency and good taste. Of course, the dilemma is that boundary is a matter of interpretation. Consequently many of the respondents felt a need to self-edit the ways in which they expressed their sexuality in front of work colleagues.

In fact, the vast majority of respondents would self-edit in the ways they expressed their sexuality in the workplace. Dean, 42, a special police constable would be consciously guarded in how he revealed any potentially discreditable information about himself to other work colleagues even though he is the lesbian and gay liaison officer at his constabulary.

'I do edit stuff purely because I want people to see me for my skills and abilities as much as I want them to see me, probably more so than as a gay person. So you know, when I'm talking to people I will use neutral language so that I am not introducing material into a conversation which they have to deal with and react to. And then if it comes out at all in a conversation then, you know, if they say, oh, who's your partner? I think sometimes if you just go into a situation as 'I'm gay' in a situation, I think you straight away, you put people on a defensive footing.'
Dean, 42, force enquiry officer, special constable, 'out' in present organisation.

Dean's sentiments typically reflect the symmetry of potential discomfort within the interaction order felt on both sides, the gay man and his work colleagues. Dean feels a need to edit information about himself sensitive to the reactions of others. Nearly all the respondents would edit how they expressed their sexuality so as to ensure that others would feel comfortable in their presence. Isaac, for example, recalled how he would not mention the fact that he had been at a gay pride march in order to prevent any potential discomfort felt by others, even though he is an active member of the organisation's LGBT network in his capacity as the engagement officer. Morris, 33, would edit how he expressed his sexuality with his work colleagues as he felt otherwise it would be too imposing:

'I don't want to make other people feel uncomfortable, for some people, they don't want it in their face. They're happy I think. They're prepared to accept the fact that I'm gay. They have no big issue with it at all, but they don't want it in their face and you know, that's fine. I don't take it as an insult in anyway at all.'
Morris, 33, primary school teacher, 'out' in present organisation.

Interestingly, Morris felt that he had to be very guarded in how he expressed his sexuality at work even though Morris cited a number of stories where male, heterosexual work colleagues would openly discuss their sexuality in the staff room. Morris gave examples,

of the male teachers discussing their latest 'conquests'. Morris felt such open expressions of his sexuality would be 'in their face' as if he were flaunting his sexuality. This seemed to be a recurrent theme from respondents that expressing sexuality might be construed by others as 'flaunting' one's sexuality. Phrases such as 'imposing my sexuality on people' (Isaac), 'rubbing people's noses in it' (Godfrey) were commonly used without seeing the contradictions in which displays of heterosexuality were commonplace. It would seem that respondents such as Morris, Nigel, Stan and Godfrey, rationalised that expressing their own sexuality would be deemed as 'flaunting' it, yet they did not view expressions of heterosexuality in the same light. In some respects, they were conforming to the dominant heterosexual discourses in their respective organisations. Pat, 52, who worked with an all male board of directors, in a social context where socialising and networking were based around homo-social events such as rugby and golf, for example, was willing to comply with the dominant heterosexual discourse arguing that such discourse was 'normal'. At the same time, he suppressed any expression of his own sexuality.

'It's just normal talk, isn't it really? I would probably say, yes, she's attractive. She is very beautiful. Something like that. You know, it's normal talk, isn't it? Don't forget. I mean ninety per cent of the population is straight and I do respect that....and it's accepted that you can do that.' Pat, 52, director of legal practice, solicitor, not 'out' in present organisation.

These findings seem to resonate with Ward and Winstanley's (2006:208) study of a U.K. fire service, where some of the firemen expressed the view that it was fine to be working with gay people as long as they did not talk about it.

Others did not openly express their sexuality in the workplace in order to avoid any potential confrontation. Phil, 31, who ran a burger bar at night would be careful in whom he divulged information about himself as it could possibly lead to trouble. Similarly, Roland, 63, would suppress any expression of his sexuality as he felt this would create an antagonistic situation.

'I don't like confrontation at work. I don't want that to be an issue. I'll tell them bits. I'll say I went to the theatre with some friends, you know, but that's it. How

close those friends are is nothing to do with them. ' Roland, 63, property project surveyor, not 'out' in present organisation.

An argument raised by a number of respondents particularly by those working in white collar occupations (Stan, Pat, Nigel, Isaac) was that there seemed to be some incompatibility between being a professional in the workplace and expressing gay sexuality.

'Virtually every teacher in the school is married with kids and they say, "What did you do at the weekend?" And I like, I could actually give you a real run down of what exactly happened. But I will edit. I will say I went for a beer with a few friends. But I won't necessarily say I went out clubbing. I won't say I went out to see a drag queen, because whilst we are all very close and they are nice, I think some staff would be concerned that I couldn't be an effective teacher.' Nigel, 29, secondary school teacher, 'out' in present organisation.

Likewise, Stan, 35, felt he needed to be guarded about the comments he made at school as he felt that school was not the place to discuss homosexuality. As discussed above, the social climate against the backdrop of the recent repeal of section 28 seemed to play a significant part in his decision to avoid expressing his sexuality in the workplace.

Previous research has highlighted how displays of heterosexual sexuality are constantly evident in the workplace in such things as conversations about husbands and wives, wedding rings, and photos of loved ones (Ward and Winstanley 2003; Loannou, 2001). It therefore seemed appropriate during the interviews to ask interviewees whether they personalised or had personalised their private work space with a picture of their partner or in the cases where they were single, if they would ever consider doing so in the future in the same way as their heterosexual work colleagues might do. The responses were quite surprising in that only one of the respondents had ever placed a picture of his partner in his office. What was probably most revealing were the justifications and explanations for not doing so. Dean, 42, a Lesbian and Gay Liaison Special police officer (LAGLO) argued that it would be making a political statement.

'I think it would be making more of a statement, if I put a picture of Will on my desk. I think it would be a statement. I think people would [think] why does he need to put a picture of Will on his desk? I think some people would see it as some

sort of political statement and you know, everyone knows he's gay. Why does he have to put a picture of his boyfriend on his desk? What's he trying to prove? I think some people would take it like that.' Dean, 42, LAGLO special police constable, 'out' in present organisation.

It seems from the sentiments raised by Dean that displays of photographs of partners would be construed as making a political statement. Although Dean is openly gay at work and is a key diversity champion recognised by the police force through his role as LAGLO special police constable, Dean observes an unclear dividing line in what he deems as acceptable and unacceptable displays of sexuality in the workplace. This is in stark contrast with heterosexual counterparts, where photographs of wives, husbands and children are taken for granted as part of the norm. It is interesting that Dean feels that by displaying a picture of his partner it would be trying to make a political point yet in the very office where the interview took place in at his workplace, displays of heterosexuality were very evident with numerous photographs of children and loved ones pinned to notice boards. These findings seem to support the arguments raised in the literature that organisations are not sexually neutral spaces but are highly sexualised based on assumptions of heterosexuality (Burrell and Hearn 1989; Wood and Lucas 1993; Ward and Winstanley 2003). As Ward and Winstanley state:

'Heterosexuals by working with other heterosexuals come to believe that they are working in a sexually neutral world, rather than one in which heterosexuals dominate. Because sexual minorities are not perceived to be present sexual orientation is not perceived to be relevant, as if gay people have a sexual orientation, but straight people do not.' Ward and Winstanley (2003:1256)

A recurrent theme drawn from the respondents was that displaying photographs of partners at work would be drawing attention to their marked difference and in many respects, as discussed earlier, would be deemed as flaunting their sexuality. These findings seem to resonate with Hall's (1989) research on the experiences of lesbians in organisations. She noted the contradictory standards in organisations, where heterosexual couples may express their sexuality quite openly whereas *'the person known to be homosexual must do nothing in particular in order to be perceived in terms of excessive eroticism.'* (Hall, 1989: 125) Of course, displays of pictures of partners in personal spaces

at work can hardly be deemed as being erotic. Nevertheless, a number of respondents felt that such pictures could be interpreted by other work colleagues as making an issue of their sexuality. This resonates with Godfrey, 47, an environmental health officer, who justified his rationale for not displaying a picture of his boyfriend on his office desk by recounting his disapproval of a gay work colleague in his previous workplace who was more outward in expressing his sexuality to others.

'He had a photo of his boyfriend on his desk. For me, that's completely alien, for me, because it's, as I say, it's too in your face. I wouldn't feel comfortable with that.....Why do I need to see a photo of your partner?.....I don't like throwing things down my throat and I don't throw things down people's throats, you know. For me, there's a lot of things that don't need to be said. You know, if things are given. For me, there's a lot of givens I think.' Godfrey, 47, environmental health officer, 'out' in present organisation.

A theme that arose from the interviews was that sexuality was deemed a private issue one that did not fit into the workplace (raised by 13 respondents). It would seem that respondents were complying with the dominant assumption as argued by Burrell and Hearn (1989) that within organisations, sexuality is deemed not important or perceived as a private concern whereas in reality organisations are very much sexualised structures. Humphrey (1999:139) in her research of the experiences of lesbian and gay men in public service occupations adds to this standpoint by noting the contradiction where on the one hand it may increasingly be acceptable to be gay in the workplace, but on the other hand sexuality is still perceived as located within the private domain. This perspective resonates with feelings expressed by Isaac, 41, who although actively involved with the company LGBT network as an engagement officer, felt that displaying a picture of his partner on his desk would be deemed as inappropriate.

'No, the only picture I've got in my office is a picture of my parents. I've never done that. Not because I'm not comfortable with doing it. I just don't think it's appropriate. I suppose the bank tries to discourage personalisation to some extent.' Isaac, 41, finance manager, vice-president, 'out' in present organisation.

It would seem that many respondents felt a need to self-impose a censorship on how they expressed their sexuality in the workplace in order not to potentially upset others or

compromise their role as professionals. The prevailing assumption was one that a gay identity was incongruous with a professional one. This was particularly so with two of the primary school teachers in my sample. They both avoided putting photographs of their partners in their personal space in order to prevent potential awkward situations in which others might feel uncomfortable. As Morris, 33, explained:

'I wouldn't want other people to feel uncomfortable and I think in my line of work with the children, I've got to be more careful because some people might be offended. I suppose there might be homophobic parents, particularly who could take offence to a gay guy teaching their children. And I don't want to find myself in a position where I'm suddenly being accused of god knows what, because there's some small minded homophobe amongst the parents of the children at our school.' Morris, 33, 'out', primary school teacher.

Equally, Stan, 35, a deputy head of a primary school, felt that displaying pictures of his partner would be a *step too far*, which would invite others to ask questions about his private life. He felt that such pictures would compromise his professional identity. This resonates with Woods and Lucas' findings (1993:20) of twenty years ago, where they noted that gay professionals believed they could separate their professional and sexual identities.

8.4. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have drawn upon stories, incidents and experiences that were extracted from the interviews in order to answer my key research question outlined at the beginning of the chapter; namely exploring the ways in which gay men manage their gay identity within the interaction order. My findings would seem to support Jenkins's assertion that the interaction order is where struggles take place in terms of the contested meanings placed on identity. For those respondents who made their gay identity known to others in the workplace, the issue of visibility had made some impact in making others aware of a gay identity. The majority of respondents used a 'normalisation' strategy in how they presented their gay identity to others in the workplace. Of course, the question that needs to be raised here is how normal is defined and given its relational term, in

relation to what. With reference to Jenkins' concept of the interaction order introduced at the beginning of this chapter, a strategy of 'normalisation' or sameness is very much one in which gay men are using a heterosexual template to emulate. A strategy of sameness it could be argued is about making a gay identity more accepting for others. Using the analogy of two plates that make up the interaction order as discussed in the introduction, the external dimension has set the agenda or the framework in which gay men should follow. This is also conveyed in the way that those respondents in professional occupations believed that they had to downplay their sexuality and consequently their difference in order to fit a professional template.

For the majority of respondents, the interaction between work colleagues in managing a gay identity was a sensitive one that needed to be carefully nurtured. Managing a gay identity required an acute awareness of the reactions of others. There seemed to be a fine line that many of the respondents had to balance. On the one side having a visible gay identity and on the other having a heightened sensitivity in how that sexuality is expressed. For many the dilemma was ascertaining how far that line could be pushed. My findings seem to illustrate the two dimensional aspect of social identity, that is, how the external dimensions of identity have a significant impact on how respondents managed potentially discreditable information about themselves.

My findings seemed to reveal a pattern where those in blue collar occupations (bus drivers, taxi drivers, factory workers and warehouse workers) tended to adopt more confrontational and vocal forms of self-assertion strategies. In the most extreme cases this included direct challenges against the alleged perpetrators to have them removed from their workplace as in the case of Ivan, a factory manager and Stuart a nurse. Some respondents within this occupational grouping felt it was legitimate to express their sexuality in an explicit manner given that their fellow heterosexual male co-workers were doing so. This was in sharp contrast to those who worked in white collar, professional occupations. Stan, Morris and Nigel, for example, who were all teachers, saw a potential conflict between their gay identity and their professional role as teachers. Although they were all out in varying degrees in the workplace, they felt they had to self-edit

information about themselves in order not to compromise their professional position. The idea of expressing their sexuality in such explicit ways as their blue collar counterparts was seen as an anathema.

My analysis of the data revealed a range of responses in the ways the respondents managed their identity in the interaction order from direct challenges to conformity. Contextual factors such as the level of seniority within the organisation and the degree of institutional support mechanisms seemed to play a significant role. Those who tended to be the most assertive or willing to confront others directly tended to have strong institutional backing and an ethos of equal rights in their organisations.

Within the interaction order I wished to explore whether gay men could be equally as expressive of their sexuality as their heterosexual counterparts. Here I wanted to find out whether gay men could talk about their partners, bring them along to social work functions on an equal footing as their heterosexual colleagues. The majority of respondents seemed to show restraint or self censorship in how they expressed their sexuality. This was particularly so with respect to the respondents' feelings towards the display of photos of partners. The vast majority conformed to the dominant heterosexual discourse arguing that displaying such pictures would be 'flaunting' their sexuality. Equally, some respondents conformed in order to avoid confrontation in the workplace.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

In this chapter I intend to discuss the findings of the previous four empirical chapters. In so doing my objective is to round off the thesis by demonstrating my contribution to knowledge and to argue how my findings add to the existing body of research on the experiences of gay men and identity management in the workplace. In tying up the various themes and concepts explored in this thesis I first intend to restate each of the research objectives in light of the research findings. The original contribution of this PhD lies in its methodology drawing upon a wide range of workplaces, occupations and experiences to explore the management of a gay identity and also the richness of the empirical findings. Furthermore, given the paucity of research on gay identity management, the value of this study comes largely from the micro level of detailed qualitative analysis it provides in that respect.

9.1. Revisiting the research aims and objectives in light of the findings

The aim of this thesis was to explore how gay men challenge, negotiate and conform in the two way process of managing their identities. Although identity disclosure/non-disclosure was still an integral component in gay identity management, in light of recent progressive legislation and more liberal attitudes towards homosexuality I aimed to explore whether gay men were willing to be more assertive and expressive in the way they managed their gay identity. The key research objectives were to explore:

- How important is their sexuality in their working lives in defining who they are?
- How do different organisational contexts impact upon the ways gay men manage their gay identity and how problematic do disclosure issues remain?
- What self-presentation strategies do gay men use in managing their identity in the workplace?
- How do gay men perceive other colleagues react and respond to their sexuality?

- How do gay men work upon, challenge, conform to, modify and resist the identities, labels and stereotypes ascribed by others?

Given the above research objectives, I will now revisit each in turn in light of my findings.

9.2. How do different organisational contexts impact upon the ways gay men manage their gay identity and how problematic do disclosure issues remain?

One of my keys objectives was to explore how gay men manage and deal with disclosure issues against a backdrop of changing workplace settings throughout their working lives. Chapter 5 explored a number of factors that might impact on gay identity management and disclosure. These included: The presence of gay work colleagues and openly gay senior managers, the impact of supportive co-workers and senior managers, the impact of both informal and in-company LGBT networks and union bodies, the impact of organisational anti-discrimination policies on sexual orientation, the level of diversity training, the impact of working in male dominated workplaces and finally the impact of recent progressive legislation.

An analysis of the data revealed that there were two key categories that a cluster of respondents fell into. These two categories I would classify as multiple constraints and multiple opportunities. Multiple constraints I would characterise as organisational environments in which respondents experienced a number of variables that prohibited them from disclosing their gay identity. My findings revealed that the key constraining factors that inhibited respondents from disclosing their gay identity in the workplace was primarily the perceived negative and hostile attitudes towards homosexuality of their superiors or line manager. A compounded factor was working in blue collar, stereotypically masculine workplaces. Typical sentiments from this group was the fear of 'coming out.' Nearly all these respondents adopted a passive compliant approach condoning derogatory remarks, not challenging discriminatory behaviour. In contrast, those with multiple opportunities, I would characterise as organisational environments in which individuals had at least four contextual factors that gave them the freedom and greater agency in how they managed their gay identity. These included: organisational

anti-discrimination policies on sexual orientation, diversity awareness training, top management support, awareness of other openly gay employees and the existence of an LGBT network or union body. It would seem that the more organisational support the individual perceived the organisation provided the more likely they were to confront or challenge any adversity or discriminatory behaviour. In the stories and critical incidents highlighted throughout this thesis a key factor has been the support of senior management. Without this support it is unlikely that respondents would have been so forthright. Furthermore, by looking over their identity management strategies throughout their working lives a pattern emerged where some respondents who had previously been reluctant to challenge others were now actively involved in in-company LGBT groups, willing to take a stand for gay equality and support fellow LGBT employees. The symbolic indicators of top management support, openly gay senior managers, diversity policies and training on sexual orientation gave them the impetus to be more visible and vocal in their gay identity. The data would seem to suggest that the more opportunities available and the more supportive the organisation was perceived to be the more likely that gay men were to be more vocal and visible in the management of their gay identity.

Surprisingly there has been little empirical attention given to the impact of gay networks and their impact on gay identity management. My findings shed some light on this neglected area. LGBT networks had boosted respondents' confidence reducing the fear factor of potential negative reactions from others to their sexuality. LGBT networks had also given respondents a greater voice and increased visibility within their organisations. Colgan et al (2007) touch on the supportive function of LGBT networks. They conclude in their findings that these networks provide a mechanism for individual and collective voice as well as raising non-heterosexual visibility within organisations. In adding to Colgan et al's research, my study also revealed how LGBT and union bodies had given gay men a platform to be more assertive in the workplace. They would use their position within their in-company LGBT network or union to directly challenge homophobic behaviour. Some respondents would use the LGBT network to raise their profile in order to get themselves noticed by those in more senior positions. This was very much career motivated. There has been a dearth of research investigating the impact of LGBT

networks on career advancement. Nevertheless, my findings add to the limited data in this area of investigation (Shallenberger 1994; Rumens 2011). My findings revealed that respondents would actively use their gay friends and acquaintances to seek job opportunities or enhance their career. More research is needed in this area. My study was able to make some comparisons with individuals over their working lives where they had experienced working in both organisations that had LGBT networks and those that had not and its impact on their gay identity management. Further research could explore the impact on gay identity management of in-company LGBT networks by investigating a number of organisations with established thriving networks with those that do not recognise them. This research could also explore the effects LGBT networks have on their performance and their career progression.

9.3. How important is their sexuality in their working lives in defining who they are?

One of my key aims was to explore the extent to which gay men attach importance or make a deliberate choice to bring to the fore their gay identity in their presentation of self. I chose Brekhus's (2003) concept of lifestylers as an analytical tool to investigate as it most closely related to my investigation. Even though more than half of my respondents saw their gay identity as an important component in how they defined themselves, only a minority presented their gay identity outwardly as a dominant identity. Nevertheless, my findings identified different types of gay identities. For a minority of respondents they chose to present a very visible outward display of their sexuality similar to Brekhus's lifestyler typology. This was displayed through gay insignia such as rainbow neckpieces and jewellery or otherwise vocally where respondents would inform or correct others of their gay identity to allay any potential doubts to their sexuality. These respondents would typically work in organisations in either the nursing and care profession or in blue collar employment with a significant gay presence. They displayed their gay identity in quite a brash manner in order to avoid ambiguity. On the other hand, a different type of gay identity was presented by those who worked in white collar professional occupations. These respondents believed that it was not professional to openly display their gay identity in the workplace. They felt they had to self-edit

information about their sexuality in order to fit into what they perceived as the expected role of a professional. The implication was that professionalism and homosexuality were incongruous. Although Brekhus's typologies are useful in identifying different ingredients of how gay men present their gay identities the typologies do not stand up to scrutiny. Brekhus puts great emphasis on individual agency in how gay men decide how to present their gay identity. My findings reveal that social context and work setting heavily influenced the degree of agency individuals had in adopting a lifestyle approach.

Another one of my aims was to explore the concepts of passive, active and politicised identities (Bradley, 1996) in relation to gay men in their presentation of self. According to Bradley (1996:25), passive identities are identities that are not acted upon whereas active identities are defined as those that we are consciously aware of and form a basis for action. Politicised identities, on the other hand, are where individuals think of their identity collectively and mobilise for action. My findings revealed that although some respondents believed that their gay identity had become active due to the reactions of others to how they used their bodies to perform non-normative forms of masculinity, they were not consciously aware of taking on a political identity in response to discriminatory behaviour. Unlike previous research (Dankmeijer 1993; Griffin, 1991), even though a few individuals wore gay insignia such as rainbow badges, rings and neck pieces (a symbol of gay equality) they did not see such apparel as making a political statement. Nevertheless, the wearing of such insignia and in one case the encouragement by one individual for other gay employees to wear rainbow neckpieces would suggest that a gay collective identity still exists. In the main, respondents no longer saw themselves as taking on a political identity in the ways that they presented themselves. These respondents and especially the older ones had identified themselves collectively as a political movement fighting for equality in the 1970s and 1980s. However, as time progressed with dramatic shifts in social attitudes and changes in the law towards homosexuality the common sentiment was that a political identification was no longer necessary. These findings were surprising particularly as some respondents were actively involved in either an LGBT in-company network or were part of an LGBT body within their trade union. These respondents did not associate campaigning for gay equality as

being political. Given that campaigns for gay equality have in recent years become more mainstream, it could be argued that the issue has become depoliticised. It is probably for this reason that a number of respondents did not perceive their actions as being political. Their motives for joining LGBT groups were primarily based on the networking opportunities they offered and in particular were used to enhance their career. Although my sample comprised a wide range of age groups, further research is needed in this area to explore if there are differences in gay identity management with respect to age and in particular comparative studies are needed to investigate whether they see themselves collectively fighting for equality.

Bradley (1996: 25) argues that identities often become active due to the negative reactions of others or due to discriminatory behaviour. In building upon Bradley's theoretical concept of active identities, my findings revealed that identities may also become active through positive experiences such as the public recognition of a same sex relationship through the celebration of a civil partnership.

9.4. What self-presentation strategies do gay men use in managing their identity in the workplace?

Using Goffman's theory of presentation of self, I wanted to investigate how gay men disclose their gay identity to others in the workplace. Over three quarters of respondents (38) identified themselves as being 'out'. A theme that I uncovered from the interview data that has not been explored in much depth previously was how some respondents used the timing and manner of disclosure as a means of empowerment. King et al (2008) note how timing and the directness of disclosure had an impact on how it was received by others. My findings contribute to this work by highlighting how those in senior positions used the timing and manner of disclosure as a form of empowerment. They chose to disclose their gay identity as a means of wresting control over subordinates to pre-empt any gossip or to show any signs of weakness. They believed that by disclosing their gay identity early it would possibly diminish any potentially discreditable effects. By taking

the initiative they were able to some degree to mould and construct their gay identity before it was created by others. These findings demonstrated the degree of agency some respondents had in how they disclosed and managed their gay identity.

Even though the majority of respondents attached a great importance to their gay identity in how they saw themselves, a number of them felt that their sexuality was a private issue that should not enter the work domain. This was irrespective of whether they had made their sexuality known to some of their work colleagues or not. A side effect of separating work and sexuality was that some respondents self-excluded themselves from work socials and possible networking opportunities in order that the two worlds did not become blurred.

A further dilemma raised by those in professional occupations was the belief that a gay identity was incongruous with a professional one. In order to present a professional role, some respondents believed they had to downplay their gay identity so as to fit in with normative male heterosexual definitions of what it means to be a professional. Presenting this definition of a professional identity meant they were compromised in the way they managed their gay identity. This was especially acute where their position required them to exert authority.

One of my key findings identified from the respondent interviews was the incompatibility in presenting an openly gay identity in occupations that incorporated an authoritative role. Rumens and Kerfoot (2009) note how there is little research on how gay men construct professional identities using their bodies. My findings revealed that in order to fit into a normative form of masculinity, they had to be extra vigilant in how they used their bodies in order that their performance is deemed credible in the eyes of others.

There has been little discussion or research on the experiences of gay men in positions of authority and the dilemmas they face. Even though these respondents had in the main organisational backing with regards to their sexuality, they still felt they had to be guarded in how they used their bodies. Authoritative power is a relational construct as French and Raven (1968) argue like referent power, it is dependent on subordinates believing that the manager has a right to exercise influence because of his role.

Furthermore, this power is only effective if subordinates identify with the manager. The respondents' presentation of self needed to be deemed credible in the eyes of subordinates whether it be a teacher controlling an unruly class, a policeman on the beat dealing with incidents with members of the public or an environmental health officer assessing the hygiene standards of a restaurant otherwise the person would lose control or become ineffectual. Non normative forms of masculinity or 'camp' behaviour might lead others to not take the performance socially expected in an authoritative position seriously. My findings revealed that if non-normative forms of masculinity were revealed the fear was that their authoritative powers would be challenged and undermined by subordinates. Consequently gay men are constrained in the ways they present their gay identity under pressure to present a normative standard form of masculinity. The interview data suggests that within the context of those in authoritative roles masculine, heterosexual norms prevail. Respondents were under pressure to emulate this standard form of masculinity not only so that their presentation of self be deemed credible but also to fit in to the expected behaviours attached to their roles. My respondents were wary of the way they expressed their gay identity in order to fit in to the normative ideals expected in authoritative positions.

Another key finding that has had little attention in previous research on sexual minorities was the impact of humour and the playing up to stereotypes in the presentation of self. A mining of the literature uncovered a number of functions that humour serves within organisations including: as a means of creating group conformity to heterosexual masculine norms and also to control others (Collinson, 1988), as a normalising strategy deployed by gay men (Woods and Lucas, 1993) and as a non-assertive approach adopted by women in their response to sexism (Hyers, 2007). My findings also uncovered a normalising approach similar to Woods and Lucas' study. However, Woods and Lucas do not problematise this strategy.

Humour as with playing to stereotypes only reinforced the meanings and ascriptions of others of a gay identity. Rather than normalising a gay identity in some cases it backfired in marking their difference as something exotic or pathological. One of my key areas of

investigation that has had scant coverage in previous research is exploring the reflective processes gay men go through in the management of their gay identity. As discussed in the literature review, our social identities are not fixed. Indeed identities including sexual identities are in constant flux. It is therefore surprising that little attention has been paid to reflexivity in studies of gay identity management. In relation to playing up to stereotypes, the advantage of a micro qualitative study was that I was able to extract from the interview data the reflective processes gay men confront in light of the reactions of others. This study has highlighted some of the costs and challenges in seeking to normalise a gay identity. One such cost was the regrets that some respondents expressed in playing up to stereotypes. In light of the reactions of others, some respondents modified their self-presentation strategy. These same respondents decided to no longer to play up to stereotypes as it presented an image that they did not want portrayed. One of the key strengths in using Jenkins' model of the external/internal dialectic is that it allowed a way in in drawing attention to the impact that the external dimension has upon the internal dimension. Jenkins' model was a useful way of exploring how the reactions of others influenced the way gay men modified and changed their presentation of self.

In contributing to our understanding of the role of humour within organisations, my findings revealed how humour was also used as either a defence mechanism or used in order to diffuse a difficult situation. Some respondents would use humour as a put down when confronted with homophobic abuse. In many respects, these individuals were using humour as an assertive strategy in their interactions with others.

Another area that my findings shed light on in a previously neglected area is the ways that gay men change their presentation of their gay identity dependent upon changing working environments. An analysis of the data through exploring how respondents managed their identity throughout their working lives revealed a clear pattern. Gay men like chameleons would change how they presented their gay identity depending upon work setting in order to fit in with the expectations and norms of the organisation they found themselves in. Through the use of reflexivity, respondents would express regret to certain presentations of their gay identity where they received negative reactions or not

the reactions they hoped to achieve. In light of these reactions they would change their presentation of their gay identity.

9.5 How do gay men perceive other colleagues react and respond to their sexuality?

My line of investigation here was to explore how others in the workplace including work colleagues, line managers, subordinates and customers react and respond to the respondent's sexuality and the possible effects this might have in shaping their own identities. An analysis of the interview data revealed that although the majority attempted to adopt an assimilationist approach, highlighting their similarity to the heterosexual majority, others still marked them as different. Adding to previous findings (Woods and Lucas, 1993) my research showed elements of tokenism. This is where according to Kanter (1977) those who are a numerically minority group capture a disproportionate awareness share compared to numerical dominants. Their gay identity marks their difference as a master status. Although, I did not interview heterosexual others whom my respondents worked with, my reading of the interview data reveals that others highlighted their difference. I have provided a number of empirical insights illustrated through nicknames, jokes and presents that others gave my interviewees. Heterosexual others in the workplace primarily marked difference in the way some respondents disrupted normative masculinity. Others were marking difference against a perceived heterosexual norm. They were judging gay men against a heterosexual template.

The interview data also revealed moments when respondents were stereotyped by work colleagues. Some respondents believed that their work colleagues made associations between a gay identity and the adoption of feminine attributes and tastes. This illustrated the powerful effect others can have in imposing an identity. This was particularly the case for those working in blue collar occupations. Work colleagues would exaggerate difference against normative masculinity, also reinforcing a socially constructed form of masculinity that gay men felt pressurised to conform to.

My findings would seem to show evidence in what Kanter (1977) terms boundary heightening. Social boundaries were constructed in the ways that others set themselves apart in order to mark difference. Boundary heightening manifested itself in the way respondents sensed the discomfort of male colleagues to their sexuality. Even to the extent of distancing themselves in case they might be tainted by association. There was also evidence of others policing normative masculinity. This was demonstrated through the ridicule and mocking of non-normative forms of masculinity. These labels were predominately based on how others associated gay men with effeminacy. I would argue that these labels and nicknames were a means of heightening differences.

Previous research has uncovered different facets of organisational silence surrounding homosexuality including: silence as a form of suppression, as a form of resistance to a non-heterosexual identity and as a form of hostility. My findings add to the issue of silence by identifying how silence can also be used by others as a form of exclusion in the workplace. The perceived distance, discomfort and lack of interest in their personal lives would suggest that others were excluding them. Such silence would inhibit the chances of fostering closer bonds and better rapport necessary for networking and possible career advancement especially in professional occupations.

Lewis (2009) highlights the fact that there has been limited reporting of positive stories around LGBT experiences within the workplace. My findings shed some light on this previously neglected area. My findings uncovered stories of inclusivity where work colleagues would support and come to their assistance where necessary. In fact the outcome of a critical incident such as perceived homophobic behaviour was very much dependent on the support of others intervening. Where the support of others such as work colleagues was lacking, it was less likely that a successful outcome would be achieved. Typically respondents would put up with homophobic remarks or not challenge discriminatory behaviour if they did not feel they had a key ally.

9.6. How do gay men work upon, challenge, conform to, modify and resist the identities, labels and stereotypes ascribed by others?

As discussed in the literature review, the key focus and unifying theme in recent years in studies of LGBT experiences in the workplace has been on the issue of disclosure/non-disclosure of a gay identity. Although inevitably disclosure/non-disclosure matters were still salient in my findings, my aim was to explore how gay men managed their gay identity 'beyond the closet'. The challenge that I set myself given the context of recent progressive legislation and more liberal attitudes towards homosexuality was to explore whether gay men were using these positive changes to be more assertive in their interaction with others. In what I would classify as the advent of the 'second wave' of research, defined in terms of post equality legislation, my aim was to explore whether gay men were willing to challenge and resist the labels and stereotypes ascribed by others. Humphrey (1999) in her research of 23 openly gay and lesbian public sector workers was one of the first to touch upon how respondents would try to educate others of a non-heterosexual existence. This was not without paying a heavy price. This was not the case with the respondents in my sample. My work picks up on this theme more than a decade later to explore the different strategies gay men use in the management of their gay identities in interaction with others.

Previous research (Wilson and Miller, (2002) and Snape et al (1995) had identified passive to active dimension in coping strategies in dealing with discrimination in the workplace. My findings contribute to this research adding a more comprehensive range of coping strategies. From an analysis of the interview data I discovered a continuum of strategies respondents deployed in the management of their gay identity in their interactions with others. These strategies included: direct confrontation, resistance, normalisation, passive compliance and acceptance of the categorisation by others. These strategies were revealed through the stories respondents told me and critical moments during their working lives when faced with adversity. These strategies were not mutually exclusive in the sense that an individual would not solely adopt only one of these approaches. Furthermore, these identity strategies were not based upon a linear journey.

As with psychological theories of ‘coming out’, it might be assumed as gay men become more confident and at ease with their sexuality that they may become more vocal and assertive in the workplace. With increased confidence with their sexuality, it might be assumed that they may use the opportunities in the workplace in their interactions in what Creed and Scully (2000) refer to as ‘claiming encounters’ to claim visibility or what Creed and Scully also term ‘education encounters’ to educate others about a gay existence. My findings revealed that it was not the case that individuals initially took a passive, compliant approach and progressed towards a more forthright assertive stance. One of the advantages of qualitative interviews was that I was able to draw out stories in how they managed their gay identity in interaction with others throughout their working lives. This is something that is lacking in quantitative studies. Furthermore, qualitative interviews enabled me to compare how they managed their gay identity against a backdrop of changing working contexts and settings. Surprisingly, my findings revealed that it was not a linear journey from passive compliance to active assertiveness. Some respondents initially took a visible educative and even a political stance earlier in their working lives but later on chose to adopt a compliant, passive approach. My findings revealed that the strategy adopted by respondents was very much dependent on the social context in which they found themselves. Given that I managed to obtain a wide range of occupations and organisational settings I was able with the aid of Nvivo8 to make comparisons between different work environments and the degree to which my respondents were willing to assert their gay identity. I discovered that those who worked in organisational supportive environments with regards to gay equality tended to be more assertive and confident in the management of their gay identity. More importantly, the support and intervention of senior management was key factor in whether respondents chose to adopt this approach. Beyond a cursory mention there has been little previous qualitative research on how the support of others such as work colleagues and in particular senior management in intervening during critical moments can affect how gay men manage their gay identity in the workplace. Those who worked in male dominated, stereotypically masculine, blue collar workplaces were typically not welcoming environments for gay employees. Respondents reported hearing derogatory comments and attitudes towards homosexuality. Unsurprisingly, given the perceived lack of support

coming from the top, all of these respondents apart from one, who was a senior manager himself, adopted a passive compliant approach. They would condone derogatory remarks and nicknames either ignoring or not putting up a challenge against discriminatory behaviour and harassment. They adopted this strategy in order to integrate themselves into their organisations.

The most popular strategy was an attempt to normalise their gay identity in their interaction with others. The strategy was to seek to minimise their difference with work colleagues. Respondents would attempt to downplay their gay identity in order to blend into the heterosexual milieu of day-to-day life. Creed and Scully (2000) refer to this strategy as adopting a 'claiming encounter' where gay men would take a casual matter of fact approach in disclosing to others. Creed and Scully, however, do not problematise this approach. A normalisation strategy requires gay men to downplay their differences and play to the organisational rules already set. Creed and Scully argue that 'claiming encounters' can effect social change. The question that they fail to address is on whose terms? Likewise Peel (2002) argues that disclosure to others can break down people's fears and prejudices. In other words, a normalisation approach implies making others feel comfortable and at ease with working with gay men. My findings revealed that normalisation meant complying to a heteronormative template in order to fit in. This was particularly the case for those who worked in white collar professional occupations, where they would downplay their sexuality in order to play the expected role as a professional. Rather than assert their difference, they took a normalisation, assimilationist approach as this was less threatening.

There are important lessons here to be learnt by both policymakers and HRM practitioners, who need to be aware of the major impact senior management support has in gay identity disclosure and how gay men manage their identity 'beyond the closet'. There needs to be action-based initiatives coming from HRM practitioners and senior managers to encourage more welcoming environments for sexual minorities. Such initiatives might include the resourcing of LGBT in-company networks combined with

sexual orientation awareness training. More importantly the message has to come from top management themselves.

In a closely connected matter, a key factor identified from the interview data was the impact of power in the choice of disclosure and management of their gay identity. My findings shed some light to this previously neglected area. There has been scant reference in previous research on the level of seniority in the workplace and gay identity management. Those who were in senior management positions tended to be more assertive and strident in challenging homophobic behaviour. Whereas those who were in subordinate positions were constrained in the way they managed their gay identity in the workplace, particularly if those senior to them expressed homophobic beliefs. They feared disclosing their gay identity would have detrimental consequences. My study contributes to the theorisation of gay identities in the workplace, illustrating through personal stories how issues of disclosure and gay identity management are shaped by both diverse personal and contextual issues. Although gay men have a degree of agency in shaping their identities context can be a major constraint.

In their interaction with others I wanted to explore whether gay men could be as equally expressive of their sexuality as their heterosexual colleagues. In my exploration 'beyond the closet', I wished to find out whether gay men felt they could express their sexuality in such matters as displaying a picture of their partner in their personal space at work, talking about their partner, or showing affection for ones partner in the work lobby/reception. This line of investigation was important to assess whether gay men could move beyond the issues of disclosure/non-disclosure of a gay identity. Beyond informing work colleagues of their sexuality, could they freely discuss their relationships, bring their partners to social events, discuss their lives outside the workplace? There has been scant coverage of sexual discourses beyond 'the sexuality of organisations' literature of more than 20 years ago. This literature uncovered dominant heterosexual discourses in the workplace, particularly in male dominated, blue collar occupations. My findings suggest that such discourses are not just confined to heterosexuality. In my study explicit sexual conversations were predominately reported by those working in male

dominated blue collar occupations or in occupations where there was a numerically large visible gay presence. Respondents noted the double standards where their heterosexual colleagues could freely express their sexuality and yet show disapproval to gay men expressing their sexuality. My reading of the findings is that there are two key factors why gay men would explicitly talk about sex in the workplace; first as a self-assertion strategy to counter the dominant heterosexual discourse giving them a sense of liberation, where before they might have felt inhibited in expressing alternative sexuality, second in tandem with the first, as a deliberate shock tactic to disrupt heteronormative assumptions, and possibly to mark their difference from heterosexuality.

In contrast were those in white collar professional occupations, there was a significant editing of any expression of sexuality so as to ensure that others would feel comfortable. My findings revealed that it was fine to be gay in the workplace as long as it was not expressed. Such self-editing included withholding information about what they did at the weekend. There still seems to be a way to go with regards to equality in managing a gay identity 'beyond the closet'. Due to the perceived discomfort of others the common sentiment was that any expression of their sexuality would be flaunting their sexuality or even making a political statement. Even displaying a picture of a partner was seen as pushing the boundaries too far. These findings highlight how there are still significant pressures within the workplace to conform to heteronormativity in order to fit into the expected behaviours of a professional.

9.7. Limitations and suggestions for future research

There are a few shortcomings in this study. One of the key ones is the representativeness of the sample. As with previous research on LGBT people, a concern was that those who would come forward to do the interviews would be a very select type of gay man. Typically they might be more confident and open about their sexuality. I had problems in finding a representative sample of those who are 'out' and not 'out' at work and the varying degrees of openness in between. The vast majority of respondents identified themselves as being 'out' (38), whereas only a minority (7) claimed that they had not

disclosed to anyone in their present workplace. I realise that my sample composed a number of individuals (9) who might be described as diversity champions particularly as they were active members of in-company LGBT networks or trade union bodies. Nevertheless, I felt it was important to obtain the experiences of those who were actively involved in such bodies particularly as I wanted to find out whether they were using these networks to be more assertive and forthright in the way they managed their gay identities. Another limitation was that my sample was skewed more towards those in their middle age with a mean age of 41. Nevertheless, this was not a major issue given that those in their early twenties for example would not have had extensive work experience making it much more difficult to reflect on how they had modified or changed the way they managed their gay identity with fewer life experiences to draw upon. Even so, a wider range of ages would have allowed me to make comparisons between the younger and older respondents in how they manage their gay identity. It would have been interesting to explore whether those in their teens and twenties have a different perspective in how they disclose and manage their identity given that this generation has entered the labour market post recent anti-discriminatory legislation combined with more liberal attitudes towards homosexuality. This certainly could be an area for future research.

One of my key areas of investigation was to explore reflectively how gay men have modified and adapted the way they managed their gay identity throughout their working lives. A potential limitation concerns the tendency of individuals to assume that their identities are stable and fixed. Many of my respondents found it difficult to think reflexively. Some respondents had poor memories or perspective of time scales when incidents happened. A suggestion for future research would be to do a longitudinal study, possibly interviewing respondents at different stages of their lives to see how they had changed the way they managed their gay identity. Alternatively the respondents could write a reflective diary over a number of years. This would overcome the problem I experienced with reflection.

My study drew comparisons between those individuals who worked in organisations that gave them greater agency in how they presented their gay identity (multiple

opportunities) with those who had multiple constraints. Further research could take this avenue of investigation further by doing a comparative study with say a Stonewall diversity champion organisation with that of an organisation that is not deemed 'gay friendly'. The study could investigate whether the organisational setting had impacted upon their gay identity strategies adding weight to my findings. The line of investigation could focus on case studies rather than individuals as was the case in this thesis. This methodology would obtain rich data from a different angle. Another avenue of enquiry could be to do a comparative study of the impact of LGBT in-company networks on gay identity management and disclosure with those organisations which do not recognise them.

This study also touched upon the impact co-workers and allies had in intervening during critical moments when respondents were faced with adversity. More research is needed in this area to investigate the impact of allies and supportive co-workers on gay identity management.

9.8. Final reflections

As briefly mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, doing this PhD has been a long journey started at the proposal stage in the summer of 2006 with an official start date of late January 2007. It would therefore seem pertinent at the end of this thesis to reflectively look over this journey to identify what I have learnt from this process and also to discuss what I would do differently if I were to do a PhD again!

One of my regrets was how I deliberately embarked on doing a PhD rather naively without actually knowing what it fully entailed. This was initially a deliberate strategy as I assumed that if I was aware of the demands of a PhD it would discourage me from actually starting it, especially as I had enrolled as a part-timer with a full time position as a lecturer. I realised that it was going to be a long journey and therefore felt that going in blind would make the journey more bearable. Taking this approach was a mistake as it meant that at times I either underestimated or overestimated the demands needed to

complete a PhD thesis. One of the key hurdles I came upon after 18 months into the PhD was a crisis of confidence and self-doubt in my abilities to actually complete a PhD. One of the most useful and valuable resources I discovered was the British Library EThOs online service that allowed me to search and order successfully completed PhD thesis. By reading and dipping into around six PhDs I learnt a number of skills including how to write in an academic style and also an understanding as to how to structure and shape the thesis and chapters. It was also an invaluable resource in mining some of the literature that previous thesis in a similar area of investigation to mine had covered. Certainly going over past PhDs boosted my confidence and helped significantly in making me understand the process of a PhD.

One of the initial problems I faced whilst writing the literature review was storing and synthesising large volumes of data. I found this a daunting problem and at times suffered from information overload struggling to fathom how to manage such large amounts of material. I learnt that by clustering the data (journal articles, books, internet sources etc) and coding the data into different themes made the task much easier as well as less time consuming in retrieving the data at a later date. If I were to start the literature search again I would probably use Nvivo8 as this would have made the classification and storage of the data a much more effective and efficient way of dealing with large volumes of material.

In the summer of 2009 I enrolled on a two day NVivo8 intensive course. The key skills I learnt from this course was the ability to use the software in order to cluster data obtained from the 45 interviews I had conducted as well as to identify patterns and themes. In addition, I was able to do a word frequency count. For example, I was able to identify how many respondents had used the word 'humour'.

After having completed each interview, I immediately personally transcribed them. I learnt that although this was a relatively time consuming task that on reflection it was a valuable activity. Whilst listening back over the interviews numerous times during transcription, I became aware of my interview style and the mistakes I was making. For

example, I realised that due to my eagerness to get the questions out, I occasionally did not actually listen to the answer to the previous question. This meant that I did not pick up on points or did not probe deep enough. I thus learnt from this error. I noticed that I became better at the art of listening with better use of probing where necessary. Another mistake I experienced was being unaware that the batteries had gone flat on the digital voice recorder half way through one of the interviews. After this embarrassing incident, I was consciously looking to ensure the red light was still on the recorder at regular intervals.

I found the write up stage of the PhD one of the most challenging, in particular, determining where to place the different themes in the empirical chapters. I found submitting two journal articles and presenting my work at conferences (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Gender, Work and Organization) gave me valuable feedback. This was especially the case with respect of the reviewers' comments. I learnt to be more clear and concise in my writing. As a part-time distant student based in Bournemouth, I sometimes found the experience a lonely and isolating one. I cherished the opportunity to meet a few of the full time PhD students, some of whom gave me useful advice, particularly with the paperwork at Queen Mary's and the expectations and preparation required to upgrade from MPhil to PhD status. Meeting my PhD contemporaries also soothed some of my anxieties and crises of confidence I suffered from time to time.

Finally, as stated at the beginning of this final reflections section, it has been a long journey lasting nearly seven years. Probably inevitably given the timescale, I have suffered some major obstacles and distractions that have impacted upon my studies including my father having a severe stroke in 2011 and my mother's diagnosis of Alzheimer's in 2012. It has been a challenge and a struggle that I believe I have managed to overcome.

Wanted – interviewees. Are you:

- **Male?**
- **Gay?**
- **Over 18 years of age?**
- **Willing to spare a couple of hours to be interviewed about your work experiences as a gay man?**

Research on Gay men, identity management, agency, and the workplace

Information for participants

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project on the experiences of gay men within the workplace, which forms part of a PhD thesis that I am undertaking at Queen Mary, University of London.

Please read the following information carefully before you decide to take part; this tells you why the research is being done and what participation involves. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. You should only agree to take part if you want to, and if you choose not to take part there will be no disadvantage for you and you will hear no more about it.

If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a form to say that you agree, you are still free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

The research

The aims of the research are to explore:

- How gay men negotiate their social identities in the workplace; the way in which they resist and challenge the identities, labels and stereotypes ascribed by others.
- How others such as work colleagues react and respond to gay men in the workplace; experiences of discrimination and harassment.
- The ways in which gay men modify or conform in their self-presentation as part of the management of their social identities
- How important their sexuality is to their working lives; what triggers gay men to reveal or conceal their sexuality in the workplace.

Taking part

The interview will be in person and take about one hour. This will take place over the next few months, at a location and time convenient to participants. The interview will firstly cover questions surrounding the organisation you presently work at. Here the questions will be asking you to describe the organisation you work in and its attitudes and policies it has towards gay issues. The interview will then move on to explore how you manage your sexuality at work. Questions are also based around how others at work react to your sexuality in the workplace whether positively or negatively and your response to these reactions. Finally, questions will ask you to reflect on your working life and the occupations you have filled to explore whether you feel it has become easier to be gay in the workplace.

Confidentiality and anonymity

All data collected for this project will be anonymised. Reports and publications that emanate from this study will be presented in a way which ensures that no comments can be linked back to an individual and all personal information is concealed. If you choose to withdraw from the study, any information already obtained will not be used. This research is complying with the ethical review procedures of Queen Mary, University of London .

Appendix 2: Interview guide linked to conceptual framework

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	sexuality as the key way they identity you?
Reflecting on the past: work history	<p>Do you think it has become easier over time for gay men to be 'out' at work? Reflecting on your working life, do you think it has been easier to be 'out' at work?</p> <p>What factors have made it easier to be 'out' at work?</p> <p>What factors have made it harder to be 'out' at work?</p> <p>How have you dealt with social events?</p> <p>How have the responses and reactions of work colleagues differed throughout your working life in relation to previous organisations and occupations you have worked at?</p> <p>Throughout your working life, in what ways would you say you have adapted/changed how you manage your gay identity in light of the reactions/responses of others?</p>

Appendix 3: Interview guide.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Theme 1: Setting the context

In this first section, rather than focus on specific individual experiences I wish to focus on your present organisation you work at in relation to organisational policies and culture

1. Can you tell me about the present organisation you work at?
Probes: Male or female dominated or gender balanced, sector you work in, size etc
2. What diversity policies with regards to sexual minorities are you aware of in your organisation?
3. How would you describe the culture of the organisation? Probes: gay friendly, emphasis on team working, work/life balance, expectations of organisation to mix business and private life
4. How gay friendly would you say your present organisation is?
5. Does your organisation have a GLBT group/network?
6. Are you aware of other gay men in the organisation you work at?
7. How does your present organisation support sexual minorities in being open with customers/clients/ the outside world?

Theme 2: Managing a gay identity in the workplace

In this section, I aim to focus on how important your sexuality is in defining who you are. I will then move on to ask how you have managed your sexuality in the workplace. Linked with this is to find out how others have reacted and responded to knowing or not knowing about your sexuality at work.

8. How important would you say is your sexuality in defining who you are? How self-aware are you about your sexuality? Probe: Do you feel different from others at work
9. Are you 'out' at work? What made you decide to 'come out'? Was the decision to come voluntary or were you 'outed'? If so, what was the process of 'coming out' like? Was it voluntary?
10. How long have you been 'out' at work? Have you 'come out' in previous organisations or positions? Probes: Who did you 'come out' to? Who did you tell? When did you decide to 'come out' in your organisation?
11. What were the reactions of your work colleagues when you 'came out' to them?
12. Can you describe any incidents or experiences in the workplace which were centred around your sexuality?
13. Have you ever had any particularly positive experience related to your sexuality at work?
14. And what about any particularly negative experience related to your sexuality at work?
15. Have you ever experienced discrimination at work? Probes: harassment, derogatory remarks, being isolated or marginalised in the workplace, verbal attacks, not given promotion etc How did you deal with it?

16. [If not 'out'] How do you feel about concealing your gay identity? What does it take or involve to do so? Do you think people at work have guessed or do you think they speculate/gossip about your sexuality?
17. How have you managed to conceal your identity? Can you give me some examples?
18. If there is a gay network in your organisation, are you a member of it? What made you join? How do you feel you benefit?
19. How do you feel about talking about your gay identity/private life to work colleagues?
20. How do you manage your gay identity in relation to customers,
21. What about your line manager
22. And what about your subordinates?
23. Are you careful over what you reveal about your gay identity to work colleagues?
24. Would you say there are times where you feel you have to cover up your gay identity in the workplace. I.e. Having to 'act straight'? If so, could you give me some examples
25. How have you responded to the reactions you have experienced from others? How did you feel?
26. Have you ever challenged/confronted a colleague because of their attitude/response to your sexuality?
27. Do you ever feel stereotyped by work colleagues because of your sexuality? If so, what kinds of stereotyping have you experienced? How did you respond?
28. To what extent would you say that others in the workplace see your sexuality as the key way they identify you?

Theme 4: Reflecting on the past: Work history

In this final section, the aim is to explore how gay men have managed their social identities throughout their working lives. The aim here is to investigate whether there has been shift in the meanings attached to a gay identity in the workplace.

29. Do you think it has become easier over time for gay men to be 'out' at work?
Reflecting on your working life, do you think it has been easier to be 'out' at work?
30. What factors have made it easier for you to be 'out' at work?
31. What factors have made it harder for you to be 'out' at work? Probes: How have you dealt with social events? After work events, Christmas parties
32. How have the responses and reactions of work colleagues differed throughout your working life in relation to previous organisations and occupations you have worked at?
33. Throughout your working life, in what ways would you say you have adapted/changed how you manage your gay identity in light of the reaction/responses of others?
34. Reflecting on your working life, in what ways have you managed your gay identity differently, if at all, in the various jobs/positions you have had?

Appendix 4: Consent form



Consent form

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Study: Gay men, identities, agency, discrimination and the workplace

Queen Mary Research Ethics Committee Ref: _____

- . • Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organizing the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part.
- . • If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.
- . • *I understand that if I decide at any other time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and be withdrawn from it immediately.*
- . • *I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.*

Participant's Statement:

I _____ agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed:

Date:

Investigator's Statement:

I _____ confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the volunteer.

Appendix 5:

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET

Name: _____ Age: _____
How would you define your sexuality?
Occupation & Position: _____
Employer: _____
Sector: _____
Previous occupations
(1) Occupation & Position _____
Employer _____
Sector _____
(2) Occupation & Position _____
Employer _____
Sector _____
(3) Occupation & Position _____
Employer _____
Sector _____

Appendix 6: Profile of respondents

Name	Personal details	Occupation Sector	Organisational Environment
Roy	47, self-defined as gay for 10 years, white, lives with gay partner, was married. Not 'out' in present occupation	Electronic Technician, manual Manufacturing Blue collar	Male dominated, small company, 35 employees, age range 17-36 of employees on the shop floor. No diversity policies
Malcolm	45, self-defined as gay for 10 years, white, lives with gay partner, was married, 2 children. 'Out' in present occupation	PCV Driving Instructor, Transport Blue Collar	Male dominated, a large number of gay work colleagues- at least 15. LGBT network but not very active. Diversity awareness courses
Andrew	41, self- defined as gay, white, civil partnered. 'Out' in present occupation	Systems Change coordinator, Finance White collar Prof	Predominately male, mid to late 40's, mandatory diversity training. Founder of LGBT group
Mike	32, self-defined as gay, white, single, 'out' in present occupation.	QA Software Analyst Finance White collar	An entirely male team, small team of five, between the ages of 30 to 50. GLBT network. Mandatory diversity training.
Clive	51, self-defined as gay, white, single. Not 'out' in present occupation.	Site Manager, Primary School Blue collar	Traditional, conservative culture, large proportion of elderly staff
Peter	35, self- defined as gay, white, partnered. Not 'out' in present occupation.	Electrician, Leisure industry, Bournemouth Borough Council Blue collar	All male, small team of four, diversity training as part of council policy. Aware of other gay men outside his department
Hans	59, self-defined as gay, white, single. 'Out' in present occupation	EFL Teacher, Education	Mixed gender, not aware of diversity policies.
Donald	43, self-defined as gay, white, partnered. 'Out' in present organisation	Gardener, Leisure Bournemouth Borough Council Blue collar	Male dominated, in small teams, normally work in pairs.
Robert	46, self-defined as gay, white, single. 'Out' in present occupation	Team Manager, Finance	Manager of a small team of 'women of a certain age'. A prominent gay presence. Known as 'Fairy Towers'. Gay senior manager.
Neal	27, self-defined as gay, white, single. 'Out' in present organisation	Senior Operations supervisor, Finance	Managing a team of five ladies. Gay manager. Chair of LGBT group.

Name	Personal details	Occupation Sector	Organisational Environment
Alfred	61, self-defined as gay, white, 'out' in present organisation, partnered	Deputy Head of Primary school	Female dominated, another openly gay younger male teacher. An unsupportive head master
Alex	34, self- defined as gay, white, selectively 'out' but not to subordinate. Partnered	Fencing contractor for Ministry of Defence Blue collar	Small company working with male boss and a very homophobic labourer.
Callum	29, self-defined as gay, white, 'out' in present organisation. Civil partnership	Area Manager for a leading retail bank	A significant gay presence in senior management positions. A supportive policy towards sexuality
Dale	36, self-defined as gay, white, 'out' in present organisation, partnered	Receptionist/ Assistant Operations manager, leisure complex	Female dominated, knows of other gay men who work for the company. Council run diversity policies in place.
George	44, self-defined as gay, white 'out' to everyone, openly expresses his sexuality, single. HIV positive	Bus driver Blue collar	Line manger is bisexual and one of the directors is gay – the only gay bus driver. In previous company there were around 20% of bus drivers who were openly gay.
Jenson	40, self-defined as gay, white, 'out', partnered	Finance Processing Manager	Female dominated, no diversity policies that he is aware of. A large number of gay men.
Isaac	41, self-defined as gay, 'out' white, partnered	Finance Manager, Vice President	Active member of Company LGBT network – the engagement leader. Strong diversity polices – a Stonewall champion
James	45, self-defined as gay, white, 'out', partnered. Civil partnership	Administrator for University	Was a member of LGBT employee network, female dominated employment
Michael	50, self- defined as gay, white, 'out', single	Regional Recruitment manager	Female dominated though works with a heterosexual man who has homophobic views. Large organisation with an international presence.
Pat	52, self-defined as gay, white, not 'out', living with partner	Director of legal practice - Solicitor	Male dominated directorship, macho, sports dominated environment.

Name	Personal details	Occupation Sector	Organisational Environment
Ron	45, self-defined as gay, white, 'out', living with partner	Sales assistant for retail chain	Female dominated with a strong gay presence.
Stuart	41, self-defined as gay, white 'out', partnered	Mental health support worker	A large gay and lesbian presence. Active union and LGBT network though Stuart is not involved.
Stefan	40, self-defined as gay, white, not 'out', single	Logistics manager of haulage company Blue collar	Male dominated industry. Knows of other gay and lesbian employees
Aiden	42, self-defined as gay, white, recently came 'out', partnered	Picture framer/artist	Small company with homophobic director. Worked closely with another gay employee
Daniel	38, self-defined as gay, white, not 'out', single	Market researcher	Company employs 250 people, knows of two other gay guys via Grindr, a strong religious presence, mixed nationalities, mainly male employees
Godfrey	47, self-defined as gay, white, 'out', partnered	Environmental health officer	Small department, mainly middle aged men. Only gay employee. Council run with diversity training
Kris	30, self-defined as gay, white, 'out' partnered	Taxi driver Blue collar	Male dominated, desk operator is a lesbian, banter around sexuality
Shaun	56, self-defined as gay, white, 'out' to some employees, single	Catering Manager	Small family run café based in a department store.
Adam	51, self-defined as gay, white, partnered	IT systems analyst	Mainly men, strong diversity policies, LGBT network though not a member, aware of one other gay employee
Ben	44, self-defined as gay, white, partnered	Deputy ward manager for health care trust	Female dominated, strong diversity policies, LGBT officer for UNISON.

Name	Personal details	Occupation Sector	Organisational Environment
Dean	42, self-defined as gay, 'out' white, partnered	Force Enquiry Officer, LAGLO, Special constable	LAGLO Officer, extensive diversity training courses, knows of 4 other gay employees on call centre
Dec	36, self-defined as gay, 'out', white, civil partnership	Senior Contracts administrator for Aerospace	50/50 gender mix in offices but not on shop floor, suspect there is one other gay employee who is not 'out', mandatory diversity training but not on sexuality
Greg	45, self-defined as gay, 'out', white, lives with partner	Business manager for Life assurance company	Mixed gender, works overseas with Indians, a number of other gay employees
Ivan	43, self-defined as gay, 'out' white, single.	Manager (trouble shooter) for glass manufacturer	80 employees, male dominated, family run business, only gay employee
Jack	34, self-defined as gay, 'out', white, partnered	Company director of gay lifestyle shop	Small gay retailer with mainly gay employees in the centre of the gay community in Bournemouth
Morris	33, self-defined as gay, 'out', white, partnered.	Primary school teacher	Female dominated, not aware of diversity policies, sees himself as a pioneer – only gay employee
Nigel	29, self-defined as gay, white, 'out', single.	Secondary school head of Science teacher	Mixed gender with 60 staff, union representative, introduced a diversity policy on sexuality, gay deputy head
Phil	31, self-defined as gay, white, partially 'out', single.	Manager of a burger bar	Small company, employs one person a 64 year old lady.
Roland	63, self-defined as gay, white, not 'out', partnered was married with a son.	Property project surveyor for council	Male dominated, a macho environment in building industry, homophobic comments from one of the architect colleagues, knows other gay employees
Stan	35, self-defined as gay, white, 'out', lives with partner	Deputy head of primary school	Mixed gender, 10 teachers with 3 men. 'Accepting' of gay men

Name	Personal details	Occupation Sector	Organisational Environment
Sam	46, self-defined as gay, white, 'out' at work, partnered, about to have civil partnership, was married with a son	Installation manager for a gas company	Strong diversity policies on sexuality, male dominated, active member of local Gay Pride group in Bournemouth, aware of other gay men in the organisation.
Pablo	31, self-defined as gay, Hispanic, 'out' at work civil partnership	Supply primary school teacher	
Paul	35, self-defined as gay, white, single, 'out' at work.	Sales assistant for electrical domestic appliance chain store	40 staff, predominantly men, only gay employee in store, unaware of diversity policies.
Louis	32, self-defined as gay, white, single, 'out' at work, HIV positive	Manager of retail store	Other gay employees, homophobic regional manager.
Simon	42, self-defined as gay, white, lives with partner, 'out' at work	Managing director of retail chain	Other gay people high up in organisation.

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